



Meeting: **Environment and Climate Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee.**

Date/Time: **Thursday, 2 November 2023 at 2.00 pm**

Location: **Sparkenhoe Committee Room, County Hall, Glenfield**

Contact: **Anna Poole (tel: 0116 305 2583)**

Email: **anna.poole@leics.gov.uk**

Membership

Mr. M. Frisby CC (Chairman)

Mr. G. A. Boulter CC Mr. Max Hunt CC
Mr. N. Chapman CC Mrs. R. Page CC
Mr. D. Harrison CC Mrs B. Seaton CC

Please note: this meeting will be filmed for live or subsequent broadcast via YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCWFpwBLs6MnUzG0WjejrQtQ>

AGENDA

<u>Item</u>	<u>Report by</u>
1. Minutes of the meeting held on 14 September 2023.	(Pages 5 - 10)
2. Question Time.	
3. Questions asked by members under Standing Order 7(3) and 7(5).	
4. To advise of any other items which the Chairman has decided to take as urgent elsewhere on the agenda.	
5. Declarations of interest in respect of items on the agenda.	



6. Declarations of the Party Whip in accordance with Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 16.
7. Presentation of Petitions under Standing Order 35.
8. Recycling and Household Waste Sites Consultation. Director of Environment and Transport (Pages 11 - 28)
9. Tree Management Strategy Annual Update. Director of Corporate Resources (Pages 29 - 36)
10. Date of next meeting.

The next meeting of the Committee is scheduled to take place on Wednesday 24 January 2024 at 2.00pm.

11. Any other items which the Chairman has decided to take as urgent.

QUESTIONING BY MEMBERS OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

The ability to ask good, pertinent questions lies at the heart of successful and effective scrutiny. To support members with this, a range of resources, including guides to questioning, are available via the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny website www.cfgs.org.uk. The following questions have been agreed by Scrutiny members as a good starting point for developing questions:

- Who was consulted and what were they consulted on? What is the process for and quality of the consultation?
- How have the voices of local people and frontline staff been heard?
- What does success look like?
- What is the history of the service and what will be different this time?
- What happens once the money is spent?
- If the service model is changing, has the previous service model been evaluated?
- What evaluation arrangements are in place – will there be an annual review?

Members are reminded that, to ensure questioning during meetings remains appropriately focused that:

- (a) they can use the officer contact details at the bottom of each report to ask questions of clarification or raise any related patch issues which might not be best addressed through the formal meeting;
- (b) they must speak only as a County Councillor and not on behalf of any other local authority when considering matters which also affect district or parish/town councils (see Articles 2.03(b) of the Council's Constitution).



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Minutes of a meeting of the Environment and Climate Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee. held at County Hall, Glenfield on Thursday, 14 September 2023.

PRESENT

Mr. M. Frisby CC (in the Chair)

Mr. N. D. Bannister CC

Mr. D. Harrison CC

Mr. G. A. Boulter CC

Mr. Max Hunt CC

Mr. N. Chapman CC

Mrs B. Seaton CC

In attendance

Mr. B. L. Pain CC – Cabinet Lead Member for the Environment and Green Agenda

15. Minutes of the previous meeting.

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 June 2023 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

16. Question Time.

The Chief Executive reported that no questions had been received under Standing Order 34.

17. Questions asked by members.

The Chief Executive reported that no questions had been received under Standing Order 7(3) and 7(5).

18. Urgent items.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

19. Declarations of interest.

The Chairman invited members who wished to do so to declare any interest in respect of items on the agenda for the meeting.

No declarations were made.

20. Declarations of the Party Whip.

There were no declarations of the party whip in accordance with Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 16.

21. Presentation of Petitions.

The Chief Executive reported that no petitions had been received under Standing Order 35.

22. Air Quality and Health Partnership Action Plan

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Public Health which provided an update on the progress to date made against actions within the Air Quality and Health Partnership Action Plan 2020-24 and the initial proposals for an updated plan for 2024-28. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 8', is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussions the following points were noted:

- (i) There was close working between Public Health and the Environment and Transport department to tackle the issue of pollution caused by Highways. For example health considerations were being input into the Local Highway Design Guide development such as specifications for Active Travel and green infrastructure.
- (ii) Public health now had input on planning applications and Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans.
- (iii) The County Council was investing in road schemes with the aim of improving air quality. For example, the Melton Mowbray Distributor Road would contribute to reduced traffic congestion and pollution in Melton town centre. The A511 scheme had also been designed with reducing congestion in mind.
- (iv) The County Council's own fleet of vehicles was being decarbonised where the appropriate vehicles were available and the business case could be made.
- (v) The County Council had been awarded government funding to install more Electric Vehicle charging points in Leicestershire.
- (vi) The County Council worked in partnership with bus operators regarding the provision of services. The Government's National Bus Strategy aimed to increase the number of bus journeys undertaken and the County Council was using government money to support existing bus services in Leicestershire. However, bus patronage in Leicestershire, as with the rest of the country, had still not recovered to pre Covid-19 pandemic levels.
- (vii) A member raised concerns that not all bus stops in Leicestershire had their own lay-bys which meant that whilst the buses were picking up passengers, traffic behind was having to wait which contributed to air pollution. It was suggested that when new housing developments were being approved, opportunities were being missed to ensure that bus stops had lay-bys. In response the Director of Environment and Transport acknowledged that ideally all bus stops should have lay-bys but noted that many bus stops in Leicestershire had been in place for many years and the physical road layout would not permit bus lay-bys. The Director also gave reassurances that bus stops in Leicestershire were safety checked and risk assessed by the County Council as an appropriate location for a bus to stop on the carriageway.

- (viii) There were 14 Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) in Leicestershire as of 2020. These areas were designated because the local air quality exceeded Government's national air quality thresholds.
- (ix) In use in Leicestershire were Zephyr air quality monitors which measured gasses and particulate matter. There were two in North West Leicestershire and one in the Harborough area. Whilst the data provided by the Zephyrs was very useful, there were different models of Zephyr in use which meant that it was difficult to join up the data from each and get an overall picture. Purchasing the Zephyrs was also expensive. Government grants were available which could be made more use of in Leicestershire as North West Leicestershire District Council had done in purchasing their Zephyrs.
- (x) The County Council had received a report from EarthSense which provided an overview of pollutants, polluters, hotspot areas in Leicestershire and it also contained recommendations around the next steps for the Partnership's work. The recommendations re-enforced national messages around active travel and encouraging people to use more environmentally friendly forms of transport.
- (xi) A member raised concerns about the high prevalence of asthma and viral wheeze cases in the under 15s in the South Wigston area of Leicestershire. In response the Director of Public Health provided details of a piece of work which had taken place jointly between Public Health and University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust which looked at whether there were correlations between areas with poor air quality and prevalence of breathing issues. Partnership working was also taking place with Oadby and Wigston Borough Council around data monitoring, and air quality monitoring was taking place around Parkland Primary School. Work was also taking place with an organisation called Modeshift to encourage sustainable and active travel in the area.
- (xii) With regards to pollution caused by cars waiting to pick up children outside schools, campaigns were taking place in Leicestershire to stop the drivers from idling their engines including putting up notices. A pilot scheme had taken place where the streets on which schools were located were closed off at opening and closing times. The pilot had been successful and a further pilot scheme would be taking place. The schemes required the support of school staff to close and open the roads as the County Council was unable to provide resources. It was not always possible to close the roads when the school was located on a main road.
- (xiii) Discussion took place around whether electric vehicles produced more particle pollution in the atmosphere from tyre wear because they were heavier. It was agreed that this would be looked into further after the meeting.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the progress to date made against actions within the Air Quality and Health Partnership Action Plan 2020-24 and the initial proposals for an updated plan for 2024-28 be noted;
- (b) That officers be requested to provide a report to a future meeting of the Committee regarding the updated Action Plan for 2024-28.

23. Government response to consultation on preventing charges for DIY waste at household waste recycling centres.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Environment and Transport which informed of the recently published Government response to the 2022 Consultation on Preventing Charges for DIY Waste at Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) and the potential implications for the Council. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 9', is filed with these minutes.

The Cabinet Lead Member for Environment and the Green Agenda stated that he was supportive of the Government's proposals in principle as the general public would not have to pay for DIY waste, but at the same time the department had costs and a budget to manage which was a big challenge.

Arising from discussions the following points were noted:

- (i) Although commercial waste could be charged for, the County Council did not accept any commercial waste at its RHWS so could not gain any income from that. The current income budget of £150,000 would be lost under the Government's proposals.
- (ii) In response to a suggestion from a member regarding the County Council reusing some of the DIY materials deposited at the RHWS and gaining an income from that, it was explained that the County Council did reuse some materials already and plans were in place to create rehome zones at the RHWS. However, further clarification would be needed from Government regarding which materials were within the scope of the ban on charging.
- (iii) A member raised concerns around how the new rules would be enforced bearing in mind it would be difficult for RHWS staff to know whether the waste was genuinely from an individual household or whether professionals such as kitchen fitters were seeking to avoid charges. In response some reassurance was given that the County Council was working on solutions to this problem. The County Council would need to put in place a new permit system but decisions would have to be made on how rigorous the system was and how much money would be spent on it.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the update on the Government response to the 2022 Consultation on Preventing Charges for DIY Waste at Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) and the potential implications for the Council be noted with concern;
- (b) That officers be requested to provide a further report on the topic for a future meeting of the Committee when further information about the Government's proposals is known.

24. Environment and Climate Performance Report to June 2023.

The Committee considered a joint report of the Chief Executive and the Director of Environment and Transport which provided an update on the key performance indicators that the Council was responsible for delivering against the Council Strategic Plan (2022-26). A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 10', is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussions the following points were noted:

- (i) Members welcomed that 248,643 trees had been planted by the Authority and its partners up to June 2023 which greatly exceeded the year's 140,000-planting cumulative target. In response to a question from a member it was confirmed that the County Council did have a mechanism for measuring the loss of some trees through disease, particularly those lost to ash dieback.
- (ii) The 'Total household waste per household (kg)' metric improved in performance slightly as waste decreased by 2% from 969kg in Quarter Two 2022/23 to 948kg in Quarter Three 2022/23. Performance has also improved over the year with waste levels having declined by 7% since the same time last year. In response to a question from a member as to how these reductions had been achieved it was suggested that it could have been because the materials now being received were more lightweight. It was also noted that during the period the data covered, the weather had been dry which would have meant that less heavy garden waste would have been received. It was clarified that garden waste was collected separately from other waste types but in the performance data it had been combined together.
- (iii) With some performance indicators such as rivers the Council did not have direct control of delivery. River quality was measured by the Environment Agency (EA) and in 2019 the EA had made a significant change to the way the data was recorded. This was due to a change in methodology in how they assessed river quality. The resulting more robust and thorough approach revealed much worse water quality that had been previously reported. The Environment Agency had been asked for more data but they had informed the Council that it would not be available until 2025. The EA's data release date was also reported in the national media. The County Council would continue to regularly request data from the Environment Agency in case rivers were assessed in Leicestershire prior to the full data set being published in 2025.

RESOLVED:

That the update on the key performance indicators be noted.

25. Date of next meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the next meeting of the Committee take place on Thursday 2 November 2023 at 2.00pm.

2.00 - 3.35 pm
14 September 2023

CHAIRMAN

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**ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE: 2 NOVEMBER 2023**

**RECYCLING AND HOUSEHOLD WASTE SITES
CONSULTATION**

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT

Purpose of report

1. The purpose of this report is to seek the views of the Environment And Climate Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee as part of the consultation on the following proposals:
 - a) Closure of three of the Council's Recycling and Household Waste Sites (RHWS): Market Harborough, Shepshed, and Somerby;
 - b) Change to part time opening at the Bottesford RHWS;
 - c) Reduce summer opening hours at all RHWS; and
 - d) Introduce Christmas Eve closure at all RHWS.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

2. The Leicestershire Resources and Waste Strategy (LRWS) sets out how the Leicestershire Waste Partnership (consisting of the Council and the seven Leicestershire District Councils) intends to manage municipal waste up to 2050. The current LRWS was adopted by the Council on 24 April 2023.
3. The RHWS service supports the objectives of the Council's Environment Strategy 2018-2030 and the 'Clean and Green' outcome within the Council's Strategic Plan 2022-2026.
4. The current RHWS Service Offer was approved by the Cabinet on 18 November 2015, and includes five-day opening all year round, charges for the majority of non-household waste, and a single service approach for all sites.
5. Since 2013, there have been a number of service reduction and efficiency changes to the operation of the RHWS service to achieve Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) savings of approximately £2.7m.
6. The Cabinet agreed to a public consultation on RHWS summer opening hours changes on 25 June 2019 however, the changes were not taken forward at the time.

7. On 13 February 2023, the Scrutiny Commission appointed a cross party Scrutiny Review Panel to test the assessment criteria applied to identify sites for potential closure and to consider how the closures would impact residents for the future. The report and recommendations of the Panel were considered as an exempt report under the provisions of the Local Government Act 1972 and supported by the Environment and Climate Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 7 June 2023 and by the Cabinet on 23 June 2023.

Background

8. The Council has a statutory duty under Section 51 of the Environmental Protection Act (EPA) 1990 to provide places at which residents in its area may deposit their household waste free of charge. The EPA requires that each place provided is open at all reasonable times including at least one period on a Saturday or Sunday. The Council has discretion to determine the number of these facilities, the location of such facilities, the opening hours to be operated and what charges if any are applied for accepting non-household waste or waste from businesses or non-residents.
9. There are 14 RHWS sites located across the County, all of which are directly operated by the Council. There are 70 operational staff working across the sites, including Recycling Operatives, Charging Operatives and Plant Operatives. The Council owns and operates its own fleet of roll on/roll off vehicles (nine HGVs). A map showing the location of Leicestershire's RHWS is shown in Appendix A of this report.
10. Waste Transfer Stations are co-located at the Kibworth, Loughborough and Whetstone RHWS. District Council depots are next to the Whetstone, Oadby, Melton, and Coalville RHWS.
11. The total operational budget for waste management in 2022/23 was £28.9m. The current net budget for operation of the RHWS is circa £3.9m (excluding waste disposal and treatment).
12. Previously, the Cabinet agreed current opening times for all RHWS which are as follows (Appendix B of this report contains a site-by-site breakdown of opening days/times):
 - a) 9.00am to 7.00pm, five days a week from April to September (summer hours) (Saturday to Wednesday or Thursday to Monday dependent on site);
 - b) 9.00am to 4.00pm, five days a week from October to March (winter hours); and
 - c) All sites to be closed on Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day.

Proposals/Options

13. Waste Services are required to make savings as part of the MTFS 2023-27. Options were presented to Members, including proposals to meet the savings target by closing some of the RHWS and reducing summer opening hours.
14. All RHWS were assessed for potential closure against a number of criteria, including:
 - a) Finance (cost per visit and cost per tonne of waste received);
 - b) Ongoing operational deliverability;

- c) Catchment areas (including cross boundary use);
 - d) Site usage patterns;
 - e) Predicted housing growth;
 - f) Site infrastructure;
 - g) Legal compliance;
 - h) Implementation timescale.
15. A Scrutiny Review Panel was convened to test the application of the assessment criteria. The Panel's report and recommendations were considered as an exempt report under the provisions of the Local Government Act 1972 and supported by the Environment and Climate Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 7 June 2023 and by the Cabinet on 23 June 2023.
16. Following on from the Cabinet's decision to support the recommendations of the Panel, a detailed proposal was developed. On 24 October 2023 the Cabinet authorised a public consultation on the following proposal:
- a) Close three RHWS: Market Harborough, Shepshed, and Somerby.
 - b) A permanent change to part time opening at the Bottesford RHWS (from five days a week to three days a week).
 - c) Reduction of summer opening hours (April-September) from 9.00am-7.00pm to 9.00am-5.00pm on three days per week (Saturday-Monday), 9.00am-7.00pm retained on the other two days (Tuesday and Wednesday or Thursday and Friday dependent on site). At Bottesford, 9.00am-5.00pm opening hours to be on Saturdays only due to part time opening.
 - d) Introduce Christmas Eve closure at all RHWS.
17. It is proposed to retain the 7.00pm closing time on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday where a site is open from April to September to cater for those working during the day. Retaining some later opening times during the week was a theme of the feedback in the 2019 consultation on reducing summer opening hours.
18. All of the RHWS are currently closed on Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day. It is proposed to close all RHWS on Christmas Eve, as data shows generally lower visitor numbers on this day compared to other days in December. The saving will not contribute towards the MTFs savings target but will partially offset additional operational costs and will enable a better service during the busy period between Christmas and New Year by allowing staff the time to prepare sites beforehand.

Consultation

19. A 12-week consultation on the proposals is currently underway and it ends on 24 January 2024. This report forms part of the consultation and seeks the views of the Committee on the proposals.
20. The consultation consists of an online questionnaire available via a link which will be available on the Council's website from 1 November. Additionally, posters and flyers have been placed at all RHWS to inform users of the consultation process and how they can participate in it. A telephone number and email address has been provided for people to request alternative formats of the questionnaire. Additional activities, including focus groups, presentations to specific groups, online engagement via Social Pinpoint etc, will also be considered.

21. In addition to service users and the general public, a variety of other stakeholders will be consulted, such as: district councils, parish councils, neighbouring Waste Disposal Authorities (Leicester City Council and other County Councils), and the Leicestershire Equalities Challenge Group.
22. Responses to the consultation will be reviewed and their impacts considered. Feedback from the public and stakeholders will be assessed to understand if any mitigating adjustments to the proposals might be needed.

Resource Implications

23. The MTFS 2023-27 includes a saving target of £580,000 from the RHWS service. The proposals considered in this report are estimated to achieve savings of £420,000, with £270,000 from three RWHS closures and £150,000 from the reduction of summer opening hours by 2025/26. The revised savings target of £420,000 will be included in the MTFS 2024-28 alongside consideration of growth pressures on the RHWS service to take account of current or proposed changes affecting how waste is managed.
24. The Director of Corporate Resources and the Director of Law and Governance have been consulted on the content of this report.

Timetable for Decisions

25. Timetable of decisions and potential implementation:

Action	Date
Report to the Environment and Climate Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee with the outcome of the consultation and recommendations	11 March 2024
Report to the Cabinet with the outcome of the consultation and recommendations (including views expressed by the Environment and Climate Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee)	23 April 2024
Implementation: Site closures and part time opening (subject to Cabinet approval)	October 2024
Implementation: Christmas Eve closure (subject to Cabinet approval)	December 2024
Implementation: Summer opening hours changes (subject to Cabinet approval)	April 2025

Conclusions

26. This report seeks the views of the Committee as part of the ongoing consultation on the aforementioned proposals detailed in paragraphs 13 – 18 above.

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

27. A copy of this report has been circulated to all Members.

Equality Implications

28. The first iteration of the Equalities Impact Assessment has been drafted (available in Appendix C of this report). An updated version will be produced upon the completion of the consultation exercise in February 2024.
29. The Leicestershire Equalities Challenge Group are to be consulted as part of the consultation.

Human Rights Implications

30. No human rights implications are anticipated but this will be considered further during the consultation.

Background papers

18 November 2015 - Report to the Cabinet – ‘Recycling and Household Waste Sites in Leicestershire - Proposed Changes and Third Sector Recycling Credits’:

<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=4232&Ver=4>

25 June 2019 - Report to the Cabinet – ‘Recycling and Household Waste Sites Future Service Offer’

<https://politics.leics.gov.uk/documents/s146584/RHWS%20Future%20Service%20Offer.pdf>

22 February 2023 - Report to the County Council – ‘Medium Term Financial Strategy 2023/24 – 2026/27’:

<https://politics.leics.gov.uk/documents/s174965/MTFS%20Report%202023-2027.pdf>

24 April 2023 – Report to the Cabinet – ‘Leicestershire Resources and Waste Strategy 2022-2050’:

<https://politics.leics.gov.uk/documents/s175771/Leicestershire%20Resources%20and%20Waste%20Strategy%20Cabinet%20240423.pdf>

Appendices

Appendix A - Location of Recycling and Household Waste Sites in Leicestershire.

Appendix B - Current RHWS Opening Days/Hours by Location

Appendix C - Equalities Impact Assessment (first iteration)

Officer(s) to Contact

Ann Carruthers
 Director of Environment and Transport
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 Email: Ann.Carruthers@leics.gov.uk

Joanna Gyll
 Assistant Director – Environment and Waste
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Recycling and Household Waste Site (RHWS) Locations Across Leicestershire



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Current Recycling and Household Waste Site (RHWS) Opening Days / Hours

RHWS	Days Open
Barwell	5 days per week (closed Thu-Fri)
<u>Bottesford</u>	<u>3</u> days per week (closed Sun-Wed)
Coalville	5 days per week (closed Thu-Fri)
Kibworth	5 days per week (closed Tue-Wed)
Loughborough	5 days per week (closed Thu-Fri)
Lount	5 days per week (closed Tue-Wed)
Lutterworth	5 days per week (closed Tue-Wed)
Market Harborough	5 days per week (closed Thu-Fri)
Melton Mowbray	5 days per week (closed Tue-Wed)
Mountsorrel	5 days per week (closed Tue-Wed)
Oadby	5 days per week (closed Thu-Fri)
<u>Shepshed</u>	<u>3</u> days per week (closed Sun-Wed)
<u>Somerby</u>	<u>2</u> days per week (closed Tue-Sat)
Whetstone	5 days per week (closed Tue-Wed)

Summer opening hours (April to September): 9:00-19:00

Winter opening hours (October to March): 9:00-16:00

Note: service not fully returned to the pre-Covid-19 number of opening days at sites underlined. Kibworth re-opened following redevelopment in March 2023.

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Equality Impact Assessment Form

Before completing this form, please refer to [the supporting guidance document](#)

The purpose of this form is to aid the Council in meeting the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty contained in the Equality Act 2010. This requires the Council to have “due regard” of the impact of its actions on the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.

The assessment is used to identify and record any concerns and potential risks. The following actions can then be taken to address these issues.

- Remove risks: abandon the proposed policy or practice
- Mitigate risks – amend the proposed policy or practice so that risks are reduced
- Justify policy or practice in terms of other objectives

1- Policy details	
Name of policy	Recycling and Household Waste Service Reduction Project
Department and service	Department: Environment and Transport Service: Environment and Waste Management
Who has been involved in completing the Equality Impact Assessment?	Vicky Cormie – Head of Service; Environment and Waste Commissioning
Contact numbers	N/A

Date of Completion	Version 1: August 2023

<p>2- Objectives and background of policy or practice change Use this section to describe the policy or practice change What is the purpose, expected outcomes and rationale? Include the background information and context</p>	
<p>What is the proposal?</p> <p>What change and impact is intended by the proposal?</p>	<p>The project proposes to implement the following changes to the Recycling and Household Waste service:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the number of Recycling and Household Waste Sites (RHWS) from 14 to 11. The sites selected for potential closure are Somerby, Shepshed, and Market Harborough. • Part time opening to be adopted at the Bottesford RHWS, reducing from five to three opening days per week. • Reduce summer opening hours at the 11 remaining RHWS sites. Sites are currently open five days per week, 9.00am-7.00pm from April to September. The proposal is to reduce this to 9.00am-5.00pm on three of the five opening days (one of three opening days at Bottesford, due to part time opening).
<p>What is the rationale for this proposal?</p>	<p>The key driver for the change is to deliver the savings target for the service agreed in the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2023-2027.</p> <p>Rationale for the specific site closures: Sites were assessed against a number of criteria, including: finance, ongoing operational deliverability, site catchment areas (including cross boundary use), site usage patterns, housing growth, site infrastructure / suitability etc.</p>

<p>3- Evidence gathered on equality implications - Data and engagement What evidence about potential equality impacts is already available? This could come from research, service analysis, questionnaires, and engagement with protected characteristics groups</p>
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What equalities information or data has been gathered so far?

What does it show?

Population Demographic Data

Data has been collated (at ward/parish level) for each of the areas affected by potential closures. Headline findings as follows (source: 2021 Census - ONS Website):

- **Age Profile:**

The table below shows that Market Harborough and Shepshed have a relatively even spread across the age ranges up to 80, comparable with Leicestershire as a whole. Somerby has a significantly higher percentage of its population in the 50 to 80 age range than Leicestershire as a whole.

Age Range	M'Harborough (%)	Shepshed (%)	Somerby (%)	Leicestershire (%)
0 to 9	9.9	10.8	7.9	10.7
10 to 19	11.7	9.8	10.8	11.6
20 to 29	9.5	12.2	6.4	11.5
30 to 39	12.0	13.2	8.7	12.4
40 to 49	13.4	12.1	10.7	12.4
50 to 59	14.8	14.1	20.4	14.4
60 to 69	11.2	12.2	16.3	11.6
70 to 79	10.6	10.4	13.3	9.9
80+	6.9	5.4	5.6	5.4

- **Gender:** Each area has roughly a 51% female - 49% male population split.
- **Legal Partnership Status:** the majority of the adult population in each area is classified as married/in a registered civil partnership or never married and never registered a civil partnership.
- **Ethnicity:** approximately 94-98% of the population in each area is White British.
- **Religion:** approximately 91-93% of the population in each area is Christian or no religion.

- **Disability:** approximately 81-85% of population in each area is classified as not disabled.
- **Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity:** data on sexual orientation and gender identity was only available at district level. In each of the districts with sites earmarked for closure/reduced opening hours (Charnwood, Harborough, and Melton) approximately 90% of the population are straight or heterosexual, and approximately 94% have the gender identity the same as that registered at birth.
- **Deprivation:** approximately 50-55% of households in each area are classed as not deprived in any dimension. Approximately 31-34% of households in each area are classed as deprived in one dimension. Note: there are four dimensions of deprivation: employment, education, health and disability, and household overcrowding.

Service User Data

Equalities data collected from respondents to the 2017 RHWS customer survey give a sample of the demographic characteristics of service users across Leicestershire. It indicates that the majority of services users are aged 35-75, male, White British, not classified as disabled, and either in employment or retired.

Rural Isolation Data

The table below contains drive time data (source: Google Maps) showing the distance and travel time by car to the nearest alternative RHWS for each of the areas affected by potential closures.

Start point	Nearest Alternative RHWS	*Distance (miles)	*Drive Time (minutes)
Shepshed (Centre)	Coalville RHWS	5.7	15
Market Harborough (Centre)	Kibworth RHWS	5	13
Somerby (RHWS)	Melton RHWS	7.9	16

*Distance and drive times were taken from google maps at approximately 11:45am on Friday 5th May 2023

What engagement has been undertaken so far?

A 12-week public consultation on the proposals is to be undertaken from 1st November 2023 to 24th January 2024. Results from this will be used to further inform the EIA. The Leicestershire Equalities Challenge Group will be consulted on the proposals during the consultation period.

What does it show?	
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4- Benefits, concerns and mitigating action

Please specify if any individuals or community groups who identify with any of the '[protected characteristics](#)' may *potentially* be affected by the policy and describe any benefits and concerns including any barriers.

Use this section to demonstrate how risks would be mitigated for each affected group

Group	What are the benefits of the proposal for those from the following groups?	What are the concerns identified and how will these affect those from the following groups?	How will the known concerns be mitigated?
Age	None	It has been identified that Somerby has a higher percentage of residents in the 50-80 age range than Leicestershire as a whole. However, this is not considered to be a significant factor in relation to the proposals.	None
Disability	None	If service changes are not communicated in a way that caters for the needs of those with disabilities such as visual impairment, then this group could be considered to have been discriminated against.	Service change communication to the public will be offered in different formats (e.g., Braille, easy read etc) on request.
Race	None	If service changes are not communicated in appropriate languages, then some communities/races could be considered to have been discriminated against.	Service change communication to the public will be offered in different languages on request.
Sex	None	It has been identified through customer satisfaction surveys that the majority of site	None

		users are male. Therefore, men are more likely to be impacted by site closures than women. However, no specific concerns have been identified in relation to the proposals.	
Gender Reassignment	None	None	None
Marriage and Civil Partnership	None	None	None
Sexual Orientation	None	None	None
Pregnancy and Maternity	None	None	None
Religion or Belief	None	None	None
Other groups: e.g., rural isolation, deprivation, health inequality, carers, asylum seeker and refugee communities, looked after children, deprived, armed forced, or disadvantaged communities	None		

5- Action Plan and Recommendations

Use this section to describe concerns further

Produce a framework to outline how identified risks/concerns will be mitigated.

What concerns were identified?	What action is planned?	Who is responsible for the action?	Timescale
Communications about service changes need to cater for different languages and those	Ensure public consultation documents are offered in different languages and formats, on request.	Vicky Cormie: consultation and public comms.	Consultation: November 2023 - January 2024

with disabilities such as visual impairment.			
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6- Way forward	
How will the action plan and recommendations of this assessment be built into decision making and implementation of this proposal?	Requirements will be built into the project/communications plan.
How would you monitor the impact of your proposal and keep the EIA refreshed?	The EIA will be refreshed after the public consultation has taken place.
Sign off by DEG Chair/Director or Head of Services	

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**ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE: 2 NOVEMBER 2023**

TREE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY ANNUAL UPDATE

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE RESOURCES

Purpose of report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide an annual update to the Committee on work taking place under the framework of the Tree Management Strategy which sets out the approach for the management of the County Council's trees and woodlands.
2. The Committee is asked to note this report and make any comment on the issues covered.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

3. The County Council's Strategic Plan recognises the importance of the natural environment and the countryside which makes Leicestershire an attractive place to live and work in. The Tree Management Strategy establishes a clear vision for ensuring that Leicestershire's trees and woodlands can provide multiple benefits that improve the quality of life for citizens and communities.
4. The Tree Management Strategy accords with the Council's Environment Strategy and complements the Energy Strategy and Carbon Reduction Plan. The County Council has declared a Climate Emergency and is committed to achieving carbon neutrality in its own operations by 2030.
5. Set within this context, the underlying principle of the Tree Management Strategy is to use the Authority's tree assets to improve the quality of life for the citizens and communities and support the Council in delivering its wider ecological and environmental strategic objectives.
6. In March 2020, the Cabinet approved the Tree Management Strategy and Tree Management and Planting Action Plan. In November 2021, the Cabinet received an update on progress with work taking place under the framework of the Tree Management Strategy, in particular the updated Tree Management and Planting Plan and the Tree Charter.

Background

7. The County Council is responsible for managing approximately 321,000 trees comprising of individual specimens, tree groups and woodlands. This includes over 400 hectares of woodland on its land holdings with approximately 37% of trees on country parks, 35% of trees on highways, 12% of trees on county farms, 10% of trees on schools and 6% of trees located across other properties. The Council has a legal duty to manage and maintain all trees on council-owned land and on the public highway.
8. The County Council has a statutory responsibility to ensure tree safety under the Occupiers' Liability Acts, Health and Safety at Work Act and Highways Act. The responsibility requires Leicestershire County Council to carry out an inspection programme undertaking works as appropriate to control the risk of injury to Council staff, visitors to Council premises, or users of the Council's adopted public highway.
9. The County Council also has a duty under the Highways Act to ensure that an estimated population of 420,000 privately owned trees adjacent to the highway, do not pose a danger to its users
10. The County Council receives an average of 1,200 enquiries each year regarding tree management. Many of these relate to safety and nuisance issues (e.g. branches overhanging the highway) but also include requests for specialist advice and guidance from residents and landowners.
11. Additionally, the County Council has a wider responsibility to provide leadership in tackling climate change and to mitigate against the social, economic and environmental problems that are exacerbated by it. It also has a broader strategic role to provide leadership as an exemplar and to influence the behaviours of private landowners, schools, communities, and individuals to create a sustainable place, so that future generations enjoy a great quality of life.
12. The Tree Management Strategy provides a framework within which the County Council can discharge its obligations to safeguard the trees under its stewardship. Adhering to the guidance contained within the Strategy will enable officers and Members to meet the Council's legal obligations and to provide leadership in tackling climate change. The Strategy covers the period from 2020 - 2025 and is reviewed annually by the Director of Corporate Resources.
13. The strategic aims of the Tree Management Strategy are to:
 - i. Conserve and enhance the tree resource in terms of quality and numbers;
 - ii. Promote public safety through appropriately resourced tree inspection and maintenance programmes;
 - iii. Fulfil the council's legal obligations as a tree owner by addressing safety and major nuisance issues effectively;
 - iv. Inform customers of our legal obligations relating to trees and manage enquiries and expectations appropriately;

- v. Establish sustainable management programmes for council woodland utilising external funding from central government agencies;
- vi. Promote and increase the current level of tree planting on public and private land to address the recent decline of individual trees and mitigate the potential effects of ash dieback and other potentially harmful diseases.

Operational Arrangements

- 14. The strategic management of the Council's tree assets is the responsibility of the Forestry Team within the Corporate Resources Department. The Forestry team employs a number of specialist arboriculturists to ensure trees across the Council's estate are inspected and managed appropriately.
- 15. All tree assets are logged on the Council's specialist tree management software Ezytreev which provides efficient data collection, inventory analysis and maintenance of trees and physical assets.
- 16. Tree maintenance in open spaces and country parks is undertaken by an external contractor; this contract was procured in 2021 and provides access to the required levels of expertise to ensure appropriate works are commissioned. Tree maintenance work on the highway network is undertaken by Operational Highways within the Environment and Transport Department.
- 17. The Forestry Team also deliver a traded service to district councils, parish and town Councils, Schools and Academy Trusts providing expert tree advice and tree inspections.
- 18. Trees within the highway are currently inspected on a three-year cycle with an average target of 16,588 trees and tree groups to be visited each year. For the full financial year of 2023/24, the Forestry Team exceeded this target and inspected 17,644 trees and tree groups as part of its day-to-day inspection of highway tree assets.
- 19. Any works identified from the highway inspections are prioritised according to risk and passed digitally to Operational Highways in the Environment and Transport Department To ensure that current resources are utilised most effectively and work programmes are effectively targeted, the different types of tree enquiry are prioritised in accordance with the following criteria:
 - i. Category 1 - Matters of safety where there is an imminent, significant danger to the public and property – i.e. urgent works
 - ii. Category 2 - Remedial and preventative work which removes potential hazards – i.e. high priority works
 - iii. Category 3 - Works which conserve and enhance the ecological and aesthetic value of veteran and locally prominent trees
 - iv. Category 4 - Works which promote the effective establishment of newly planted trees or which address minor nuisance issues

Tree Planting Pledge

20. In 2021 the Council made a pledge to plant 700,000 trees', which is the equivalent of one for every resident of Leicestershire. The Forestry Team has led on delivery of the pledge, in particular partnership working with a range of different organisations such as the Woodland Trust and National Forest to facilitate and deliver the planting of new trees in Leicestershire.
21. The 'Trees' microsite (<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/trees>), which was created to highlight the pledge and provide an interactive map of tree planting to encourage residents to log tree planting in their communities, has been very successful. The site enables tree planting across the County to be more effectively captured and monitored and a clear view on progress towards the pledge provided. To date 248,342 trees have been logged on the interactive map.
22. The original target was based on an average of 70,000 trees planted per annum over 10 years, however if the current trajectory is maintained the Council may achieve this target in the next 6-8 years.
23. The trees microsite brings together guidance on tree care, information on tree wardens and news channels.
24. Despite the current success with tree planting, it is recognised that more emphasis on planting outside of the National Forest will increase the wider benefits of trees to residents across the County.
25. A key delivery function of the pledge will be the development of a new tree nursery by the Council, in partnership with the National Forest, to secure suitable native tree stock and ensure a continued supply of trees for planting schemes delivered both by the County Council and partners throughout the County.
26. Funding has been secured for the next four years with £100,000 per annum to deliver the creation of the tree nursery within the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). Contractors will be appointed to undertake the work in line with the Councils contract processes with a target date for set up and operation from March 2024.
27. The Council has been successful in attracting external funding to deliver key projects throughout the County in partnership with other public sector bodies:
 - i. Forestry Commission Local Authority Treescape Fund (£355k) between 2021/22 and 2026/27;
 - ii. Forestry Commission Urban Tree Challenge Fund (£38K);
 - iii. Forestry Commission Tree Production Capital Grant (£34k);
 - iv. DEFRA Coronation Living Heritage Fund (£30k) application pending for orchard projects;
 - v. Forestry Commission Woodland Creation Accelerator Fund (£150k);
28. Applications to the Forestry Commission Local Authority Treescape Fund, Urban Tree Challenge Fund and DEFRA Coronation Living Heritage Fund have been made by the County Council on behalf of a wider partnership involving district and parish councils which will provide capital and revenue funding over four years to plant and maintain new trees.

29. Funding received through the Forestry Commission Tree Production Capital Grant will support the development of the new tree nursery.
30. The Forestry Commission grant to the Council through the Woodland Creation Accelerator Fund in particular enables us to support a temporary project officer and consultant support to kickstart projects and coordinate and encourage new tree planting throughout the County over the next two years. It is hoped that further funding from the Forestry Commission will be made available to continue this revenue support for project work.

Partnership Working

31. The Leicestershire Tree Charter was launched by the County Council during National Tree Week in November 2021 in conjunction with the National Forest. The Charter calls for a collective vision and partnership working across Leicestershire to enhance the treescape and identifies three key drivers for action: to support a secure and safe future, to enhance the wellbeing of communities and to facilitate sustainable enterprise.
32. Through the Tree Charter and to enable delivery of a 'tree for every person', the Council is working with partners such as district and parish councils to deliver projects which will engage residents and other partners by raising awareness about the benefits of trees and encouraging tree planting.
33. Funding for County Council-led tree planting projects has continued to be provided through the Council's Ash Dieback Board, in particular, for the supply of free tree packs, hedge packs and the MOREwoods project in partnership with the Woodland Trust. A new Orchard scheme has been launched for 2023 to enable the creation of new orchards with community groups, schools and other publicly accessible sites.
34. The Council meets with local and national organisations to promote and encourage community participation in tree planting and tree management. One such success is the County Council Tree Warden Scheme which is supported nationally by The Tree Council. This has been running for 40 years and has 124 members of the Leicestershire Network involved. The Tree Warden Network involves 78 parish councils, who manage the volunteer Tree Wardens directly and one independent organisation who also manage Tree Warden volunteers-Harborough Woodland.
35. The Forestry team is also working with partners at a district level to increase tree planting in main town centres and are discussing potential new schemes in both Harborough and Melton to increase trees and enhance key market towns.

Ash Dieback

36. The challenges posed by the Ash Dieback disease present within Leicestershire are being addressed through the Council's Ash Dieback Action Plan. Ash Dieback, sometimes known as "Chalara" is caused by a fungal pathogen and affects Fraxinus Excelsior (Ash) and other Fraxinus species and was first detected in Leicestershire in 2012. Once infected, a high proportion of trees will die (the rate of decline varies according to the age, health and condition of the tree).

37. There are over 500,000 Ash trees in Leicestershire, many of which are on adopted highway verges or adjacent to areas of public use. As the Highway Authority, the Council is responsible for maintaining the safety of all road users.
38. The effects of Ash Dieback will have a significant effect on the biodiversity and landscape of the County and the proposed tree planting initiatives outlined in the Tree Management and Planting Action Plan will assist with mitigating this loss.
39. In response to the challenges of Ash Dieback the Council produced an Ash Dieback Action Plan in 2019 to outline how it manages the anticipated risks and issues associated with the spread of ash dieback across the county. The Action plan is monitored by the Ash Dieback Board which is comprised of key officers from the Council's Corporate Resources and Environment Teams. Through the Ash Dieback Action Plan the Council is undertaking a programme of ongoing inspections of its highway trees prioritised by the road classification to monitor progress of the disease and identify works as required.
40. A specialist Ash Dieback Works contract has recently been tendered. The winning tender from a specialist arboricultural and forestry company will enable the Council to plan and undertake large scale mechanised tree works on the highway network over the next five years.
41. Monitoring of Ash Dieback is undertaken throughout the summer by the Forestry Team to identify trends and provide a specific work programme for highway trees. Work to measure tree decline and the success of new tree planting will be undertaken between measured time frames with the use of GIS mapping tools and the National Tree Map (created from high resolution national aerial photography, accurate terrain and surface data, and colour infrared imagery). These tools will enable the Team to provide a snapshot over time of changes in the overall canopy cover across the County. It will also enable the Council to set broader tree planting targets by ward and assist targeting tree planting to wards with low canopy coverage and other factors such as indices of deprivation.
42. The Council has produced a protocol for dealing with Ash Dieback within private land adjacent to the Highway. A specific Ash Dieback liaison officer is leading on identifying ash trees which may pose a concern and identifying land ownership information to inform them of their legal duties. To aid this work a new leaflet for landowners and ash dieback has been developed.

Resource Implications

43. There are no resource implications arising from this report. Tree planting initiatives are fully funded through external grants which have been sourced and also finances have been allocated through the MTFs to support the Ash Dieback and the forestry programme.
44. Any future funding requirements that might emerge from the implementation of the Tree Management Strategy or measures to respond to the spread of Ash Dieback will require individual business cases to be developed and approved by the Director of Corporate Resources or by Members as appropriate.

Conclusions

45. Our trees make a valuable contribution to what makes Leicestershire a great place to live, and the Council continues to lead in all matters concerning relating to the proactive management of our trees and woodland.
46. The Tree Management Strategy enables the County Council to preserve, develop and increase its tree stock and maximise the associated natural capital benefits. Work is continuing by the Forestry Team to ensure that the Council meet the pledge for the planting of 700,000 trees across the County. In particular success in securing external grants will ensure that tree planting is supported by a range of partner organisations.
47. The cyclic inspection of Council-owned trees on the highway is being effectively monitored and any work required is undertaken in accordance with the Tree Management Strategy. Overall, the Council is managing trees within its custodianship in an appropriate and effective way to balance the risk to the public whilst maintaining a sustainable tree population capable of withstanding predicted climatic changes and the impact of diseases such as Ash Dieback.

Background papers

Tree Management Strategy 2020-2025

<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/field/pdf/2021/2/16/Tree-Management-Strategy-2020-2025.pdf>

Environment Strategy 2018 – 2030

<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/field/pdf/2018/7/19/LCC-Environment-Strategy-2018-2030-June-18.pdf>

Ash Dieback Action Plan

<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/field/pdf/2019/6/4/Ash-Dieback-Action-Plan.pdf>

Leicestershire Tree Charter

<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/field/pdf/2021/11/30/Leicestershire-tree-charter.pdf>

Report to Environment and Climate Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee
November 2022

<https://politics.leics.gov.uk/documents/s172042/Tree%20Management%20Strategy.pdf>

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

48. None.

Equality Implications

49. There are no equality implications arising from this report. Although any future change to the Council's policies, procedures, functions and services because of the Strategy or associated action plans will be the subject of an Equality Impact Assessment as appropriate.

Human Rights Implications

50. There are no human rights implications arising from this report.

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