



CABINET - 24 OCTOBER 2023

RECYCLING AND HOUSEHOLD WASTE SITES
PROPOSED CONSULTATION

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT

PART A

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to advise the Cabinet of proposals to achieve savings included within the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2023-27 in relation to the Recycling and Household Waste Site (RHWS) Service, and to seek approval to commence a public consultation exercise on the proposals set out in this report.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended that:
 - a) The commencement of a public consultation exercise on the following proposals be approved:
 - i. The closure of three of the Council's Recycling and Household Waste Sites at Market Harborough, Shepshed, and Somerby.
 - ii. A permanent change of opening hours at the Bottesford RHWS from five to three days a week.
 - iii. The reduction of the summer opening hours at all RHWS in the County.
 - iv. The introduction of Christmas Eve closure at all RHWS.
 - b) A further report be submitted to the Cabinet in April 2024 detailing the outcome of the consultation and presenting the final proposal for approval.

Reasons for Recommendation

3. The proposals have been developed to respond to the need for savings as set out in the agreed Medium Term Financial Strategy 2023-27.
4. A public consultation exercise will help to identify the possible effects of the changes for the public and stakeholders and to identify whether amendment to the proposals and/or any mitigating action is required.

Timetable for Decisions (including Scrutiny)

5. As part of the consultation exercise, a report will be considered by the Environment and Climate Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 2 November 2023 and its comments will be reported to the Cabinet in April 2024.
6. It is the intention that the 12-week public consultation period will run from 1 November 2023 to 24 January 2024. A report will be submitted to the Cabinet in April 2024 regarding the outcome of the consultation and presenting a detailed proposal.
7. The timetable for the introduction of any changes in the provision of the RHWS service will be subject to the outcome of the public consultation. Should the proposals be agreed, it is anticipated that closures would be implemented in October 2024, summer opening hours changed from April 2025, and Christmas Eve closures commence with effect from 24 December 2024.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

8. The Leicestershire Resources and Waste Strategy (LRWS) sets out how the Leicestershire Waste Partnership (consisting of the Council and the seven districts) intends to manage municipal waste up to 2050. The current Leicestershire Municipal Waste Management Strategy was adopted by the Council on 24 April 2023.
9. 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.
10. Since 2013, there have been a number of service reduction and efficiency changes to the operation of the RHWS service to achieve MTFs savings of approximately £2.7m.
11. 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.
12. The Cabinet agreed to a public consultation on RHWS summer opening hours changes on 25 June 2019, but the changes were not taken forward at that time.
13. 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 recommendations of the Panel were supported by the Cabinet on 23 June 2023.

Resource Implications

14. 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 MTF5 2024-28 alongside consideration of growth pressures on the RHWS service to take account of current or proposed changes affecting how waste is managed.

Legal Implications

15. Although the responsibility to provide recycling centres originally dates back to 1967, the legal duty to provide such facilities is currently set out in Section 51 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.
16. That legislation does not prescribe the number of facilities needed in a county area, save that there is a requirement for them to be 'reasonably accessible to persons resident in the area'. They must be open at reasonable times, including on a Saturday or Sunday (with limited exceptions) and they must be available free of charge to persons resident in the area.
17. Although statute does not specify the number of centres to be provided in a local area, guidance is available to waste professionals (e.g., the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) Guidance 2016) which contains recommendations regarding the availability of recycling centres within a given radius of urban and rural areas.
18. The Director of Corporate Resources and the Director of Law and Governance have been consulted on the content of this report.

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

19. A copy of this report has been circulated to all members.

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PART B

Background

20. 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.
21. There are 14 RHWS 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.
22. Waste Transfer Stations are co-located at the Kibworth, Loughborough and Whetstone RHWS. District council depots are sited next to the Whetstone, Oadby, Melton, and Coalville RHWS.
23. The total operational budget for waste management in 2022/23 was £28.9m. The current net budget for operation of the RHWS is approximately £3.9m (excluding waste disposal and treatment).
24. The current opening times for all RHWS are as follows (Appendix B contains a site-by-site breakdown of opening days/times):
 - a) 9.00am to 7.00pm, from April to September (summer hours) (Saturday to Wednesday or Thursday to Monday dependent on site);
 - b) 9.00am to 4.00pm, from October to March (winter hours); and
 - c) All sites are closed on Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day.

Proposals/Options

25. Waste Services were required to make savings as part of the MTFs 2023-27. Options were presented to Members, and proposals to meet the savings target were predicated on RHWS closures and a reduction in summer opening hours.
26. 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
27. A Scrutiny Review Panel was convened to test the application of the assessment criteria. The Panel's report and recommendations were considered and supported by the Cabinet on 23 June 2023.
28. The detailed proposals have been developed following the Cabinet's consideration of the report of the Review Panel. It is proposed that the following option is taken forward for public consultation:
- a) Closure of 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 (Sat-Mon), 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 on Saturdays only due to part time opening (see Appendix B of this report for further opening times).
29. It is proposed to retain the 7.00pm closing time on two weekdays per week 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 summer opening hours changes.
30. It is also proposed to change the opening days at the Melton RHWS from Thursday-Monday to Saturday-Wednesday to ensure that there is sufficient distribution of sites open across the County each weekday following the proposed closure of the three RHWS.
31. As requested by the Panel, assessments are underway to understand the impact of closing Market Harborough RHWS on traffic volumes at Kibworth RHWS, and Section 106 money committed at the RHWS earmarked for potential closure. The outcome will be reported to the Cabinet in April 2024 with the results of the consultation.

Christmas Eve Closure

32. 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. This will not contribute towards the MTFs savings target but will partially offset additional operational costs and enable a better service during

the busy period between Christmas and New Year by allowing staff the time to prepare sites beforehand.

Consultation

33. Subject to the Cabinet's approval, the next steps would be for an appropriate consultation process to commence. A timetable of the proposed process is shown below:

Action	Date
Consultation (public and stakeholders – 12 weeks)	1 November 2023 to 24 January 2024
Report to the Environment and Climate Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee	2 November 2023
Analysis of results and development of detailed implementation options	January - February 2024
Report to the Environment and Climate Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee with the outcome of the consultation	14 March 2024
Report to the Cabinet with the outcome of the consultation and recommendations	23 April 2024
Implementation: Site closures and part time opening (subject to the Cabinet approval)	October 2024
Implementation: Summer opening hours changes (subject to the Cabinet approval)	April 2025

34. The proposed consultation will consist of an online questionnaire available via a link from the Council's website. Additionally, posters and flyers will be placed at all RHWS that will inform users of the consultation process and how they can take part. A telephone number and email address will be 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.
35. 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.

Risks

36. Key risks associated with the implementation of the proposals in this report are as follows:
- a) Recruitment and retention issues for operational staff might be exacerbated causing service disruption.
 - b) Increased demand at remaining sites resulting in issues such as queuing on the highway at peak times.
 - c) Future Government legislation changes may result in the need for operational growth following service reductions.
 - d) Complaints from neighbouring Waste Disposal Authorities concerning cross border waste site usage following closures.

Equality Implications

37. The first iteration of the Equalities Impact Assessment has been drafted (attached as Appendix C to this report). An updated version, reflecting feedback from the public consultation, will be produced upon the completion of the consultation exercise in February 2024.

Human Rights Implications

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

Background Papers

23 May 2012 – Report to the County Council – ‘Leicestershire Municipal Waste Management Strategy Update 2011’:

<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieIssueDetails.aspx?IId=31065&PlanId=0&Opt=3#AI31186>

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>

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)

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