



**ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY  
COMMITTEE - 11 MARCH 2024**

**RECYCLING AND HOUSEHOLD WASTE SITES  
CONSULTATION OUTCOME, RECOMMENDATIONS AND FURTHER  
CONSULTATION**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT**

**Purpose of Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to:
  - a) Inform the Committee of the outcome of public consultation on the following proposals:
    - i. Closure of three of the Council's Recycling and Household Waste Sites (RHWS): Market Harborough, Shepshed, and Somerby;
    - ii. Change to part-time opening at Bottesford RHWS;
    - iii. Reduction of summer opening hours at all RHWS; and
    - iv. Introduction of Christmas Eve closure at all RHWS.
  - b) Inform the Committee of the revised proposals to keep Market Harborough RHWS and Shepshed RHWS open part-time and reduce the opening days at Kibworth RHWS and seek its views as part of a secondary consultation exercise.

**Policy Framework and Previous Decisions**

2. The Leicestershire Resources and Waste Strategy, adopted by the Council on 24 April 2023, sets out how the Leicestershire Waste Partnership (consisting of the Council and the seven districts) intends to manage municipal waste up to 2050.
3. 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. The current RHWS service offer was approved by the Cabinet in November 2015.
4. The Cabinet agreed to a public consultation on RHWS summer opening hours changes in June 2019, but the changes were not taken forward at the time.
5. On 13 February 2023, the Scrutiny Commission appointed a cross-party Scrutiny Review Panel to test the assessment criteria used to identify sites for potential closure, and to consider how the closures would impact residents in the future.

The report and recommendations of the Panel were considered and supported by the Environment and Climate Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 7 June 2023 and by the Cabinet on 23 June 2023.

6. On 24 October 2023, the Cabinet agreed to commence public consultation on:
  - a) Closure of three of the Council's RHWS: Market Harborough, Shepshed, and Somerby;
  - b) Change to part-time opening at Bottesford RHWS;
  - c) Reduction of summer opening hours at all RHWS; and
  - d) Introduction of Christmas Eve closure at all RHWS.
7. A report outlining the above proposals and seeking views as part of the public consultation was considered by the Committee on 2 November 2023.
8. The Cabinet at its meeting on 9 February 2024 considered a report setting out the proposed MTFs for 2024/25 to 2027/28 and inter alia recommended amended proposals in relation to the RHWS service, to be funded from the Service Investment Fund and subject to further consultation. The Cabinet agreed that, subject to the Council's approval of the MTFs, the Director of Environment and Transport be authorised to consult on the revised proposals for the RHWS service.
9. The County Council at its meeting on 21 February 2024 approved the MTFs.

### **Background**

10. 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.
11. 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. A map showing the location of Leicestershire's RHWS is attached at Appendix A.
12. 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).
13. The opening times for all RHWS are currently as follows:
  - 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 are closed on Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day.

## **Public Consultation Findings**

14. A twelve-week public consultation on the proposals at paragraph 6 above was undertaken between 1 November 2023 and 24 January 2024. The consultation consisted of an online questionnaire accessed via the 'Have your say' page on the Council's website and a series of focus groups were undertaken with members of the public.
15. A variety of other stakeholders were consulted, such as district councils, parish councils, neighbouring Waste Disposal Authorities (Leicester City Council and county councils), and the Leicestershire Equalities Challenge Group (LECG).

### **'Have Your Say' Online Survey Headline Findings**

16. Full findings from the 'Have your say' online survey can be found in the Consultation Survey Analysis Report (Appendix B).
17. There were 5,638 responses to the online questionnaire. The table below shows the headline demographic data for questionnaire respondents, compared to the general population of Leicestershire.

<b>Demographic Characteristics</b>	<b>Questionnaire Respondents</b>	<b>Leicestershire Population</b>
Female	53%	51%
Aged 45-75	64%	32%
White ethnicity	96%	88%
Heterosexual	93%	92%
Not Disabled	81%	83%

Population data source: 2021 Census

18. The majority of respondents strongly disagreed/tended to disagree with the proposed closure of Market Harborough RHWS (73%), Shepshed RHWS (67%), and Somerby RHWS (40%). The proportion of respondents who strongly disagreed/tended to disagree with the proposed closures increased significantly for those who either lived in the local area or were regular users of the sites. The key response themes were:
  - a) Concerns about environmental impacts such as increased fly tipping and driving further to alternative sites.
  - b) Concerns that Market Harborough RHWS and Shepshed RHWS are in areas of housing development.
  - c) Concerns about the suitability of alternative sites such as traffic safety at the A6 entrance to the Kibworth RHWS and increased usage at other already busy sites.
19. The majority of respondents (59%) neither agreed nor disagreed with part-time opening at Bottesford RHWS. The proportion of respondents who agreed with the proposal increased for those who were regular users of the site (70%). The key response themes were:

- a) Support for the proposal as part-time opening is preferable to closure.
  - b) Concerns about increased fly tipping.
20. The majority of respondents (56%) tended to agree/strongly agree with the proposal to reduce summer opening hours at all RHWS. The key response themes were:
- a) Support for the proposal as an alternative to closing sites.
  - b) Support for the proposal as it is a sensible way to save money.
  - c) Suggestions of alternative opening hours to those proposed.
21. The majority of respondents (92%) tended to agree/strongly agree with the proposal to introduce Christmas Eve closure at all RHWS. The key response themes were:
- a) Support for RHWS staff having Christmas Eve off.
  - b) Support for the proposal as people are unlikely to prioritise visiting an RHWS on Christmas Eve.
  - c) Support for the proposal as visitor numbers are lower on Christmas Eve.
22. The questionnaire asked respondents for alternative suggestions on ways of making savings. The key response themes were:
- a) Reduce hours and opening days at the sites proposed for closure and the RHWS around the County.
  - b) Reduce staffing levels at RHWS, utilise volunteers to staff sites, and greater use of automated systems at sites.
  - c) Generate income via reuse and recycling of items.
  - d) Charge to visit sites and to dispose of specific types of waste.
  - e) Improve the range and quantity of kerbside collections to reduce demand on RHWS.

### Focus Groups

23. Full findings can be found in the Focus Group Report (Appendix C) and a summary is given below.
24. Six online focus groups were held with a mixture of Leicestershire residents, and residents from the areas specifically affected by potential RHWS closures. Feedback from the participants is summarised as follows:
- a) Closure of Market Harborough, Shepshed and Somerby sites:
    - i. People who were regular visitors to the sites were the most affected and unhappy about the plans.
    - ii. The closures were considered short-sighted due to the housing development around Market Harborough and Shepshed.
    - iii. The savings were considered small especially if it will increase fly tipping.
    - iv. There were concerns regarding closing Market Harborough RHWS as it is seen as a good site with good access; participants would have

preferred closing Kibworth RHWS which is seen as having less good access.

- v. It was felt that closures should have been thought through before investing in the Kibworth site (the redevelopment of the site took place between November 2021 and March 2023).

b) Part-time opening at Bottesford RHWS:

- i. Site users were relieved that the proposal was to keep the site open part-time rather than close it.
- ii. Weekend access to the site was considered crucial.

c) Reduction of summer opening hours:

- i. This was considered to have a low impact on households.
- ii. There was a preference for more evening opening times in the summer, instead of opening early in the morning.
- iii. It was suggested that winter opening hours were reduced, and sites kept open for longer in summer instead.

d) Christmas Eve closure:

- i. No one had visited sites on Christmas Eve, some assumed sites were shut, others stated they had 'better things to do'.
- ii. Participants felt it was a very reasonable change and would have a low impact on households.

### Other Consultation Activity

25. Views on the proposals were also sought from parish councils, district councils, neighbouring local authorities, the Environment and Climate Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and the LECG. Detailed feedback is given in the Consultation Survey Report (Appendix B) and summarised below.

26. A number of parish councils, district councils and neighbouring local authorities submitted responses as part of the online survey. Of those that responded via letter/email, the following concerns were raised:

- a) Harborough District Council's main concerns were the impact of closing Market Harborough RHWS on traffic safety at Kibworth RHWS, and the potential for increased fly tipping.
- b) North Northamptonshire Council's main concerns were that the closure of Market Harborough RHWS could create cross-over demand to their facilities, and the potential cost to them of implementing residents only permit system should cross-border use increase.
- c) Hathern Parish Council's main concerns were the closure of Shepshed RHWS leading to increased fly tipping, increased congestion in Loughborough due to people using the site there as an alternative, and the environmental impact of people making longer car journeys to alternative sites.

27. This Committee considered the proposals at its meeting on 2 November 2023 and its main concern was housing growth proposed for Harborough increasing visitor numbers at Kibworth RHWS and, therefore, placing increased pressure on local roads.
28. The LECG's main concerns were an increase in fly tipping, closures causing congestion in built-up areas as people travel to alternative sites, closing RHWS while population increases, queuing at alternative sites, and older people in Somerby having to travel further to an alternative RHWS.

#### Kibworth RHWS Traffic Assessment

29. In December 2023, the Council's Network Data and Intelligence Team undertook work to understand the potential impact of increased traffic accessing Kibworth RHWS should Market Harborough RHWS close. The worst-case scenario was modelled to understand the impact of 100% of Market Harborough RHWS visitors using Kibworth RHWS as an alternative at peak times of day and year.
30. The data suggests that the right turn into the Kibworth RHWS on the A6 could cope with additional visits resulting from the closure of Market Harborough RHWS. However, future housing developments, and Government legislation changes have not been factored in and may increase demand on Kibworth RHWS in future.
31. The revised proposal to keep Market Harborough RHWS open part-time would mean that a smaller proportion of Market Harborough RHWS visitors would be expected to use Kibworth RHWS as an alternative.

#### Revised Proposals

32. When considering a report setting out the 2024/25 to 2027/28 MTFs on 9 February 2024, the Cabinet noted the amended proposals in relation to the RHWS service. It was agreed that, subject to the outcome of a further public consultation, the £100,000 required to fund the reduced saving from the amended proposals would come from the Service Investment Fund. In light of this, and the public and stakeholder feedback from the original consultation, it is now proposed to keep Market Harborough RHWS and Shepshed RHWS open part-time, and to reduce the number of opening days at Kibworth RHWS.
33. Market Harborough RHWS would change from opening five days to three days per week, and Shepshed RHWS would change from opening three days to two days per week. Implementing this would also require a reduction in opening days from five days to four days per week at Kibworth RHWS to make the proposal operationally viable. As these changes had not been put forward for consideration as part of the public consultation detailed above, a further, secondary, consultation exercise is now required.
34. The original proposal to close Somerby RHWS remains, due to its high operational cost per visit and low visitor numbers, as does the proposal to reduce summer opening hours for all RHWS, and close all sites on Christmas Eve and, therefore, these do not form part of the secondary consultation.

### **Resource Implications**

35. The revised proposals recommended in this report (subject to the further consultation) are estimated to achieve annual savings of £300,000, and it is anticipated that the project will deliver these savings by 2025/26. The revised savings target of £300,000 has been included in the MTFs 2024-28, approved by the Council on 21 February 2024.
36. The Director of Corporate Resources and the Director of Law and Governance have been consulted on the content of this report.
37. Work was undertaken to understand the amount of Section 106 developer contribution money that has been received but not spent for Market Harborough RHWS and Shepshed RHWS as well as monies not yet received but where a legal agreement is in place. Somerby RHWS is not affected as it does not have any Section 106 money allocated. The revised proposal to keep Market Harborough RHWS and Shepshed RHWS open part-time has now superseded this work.

### **Secondary Public Consultation**

38. A secondary four-week consultation on the proposed changes to opening days at Market Harborough RHWS, Kibworth RHWS and Shepshed RHWS started on 21 February and will end on 20 March 2024. This report forms part of this consultation and seeks the Committee's views on the proposals.
39. The consultation consists of an online questionnaire available via a link from the Council's website. In addition, a variety of other stakeholders will be consulted, such as district councils, parish councils, neighbouring Waste Disposal Authorities (Leicester City Council and county councils), and the LECG.
40. 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. It is intended that a further report would only be presented to this Committee if the proposals are further amended as a result of the secondary consultation.

### **Timetable for Decisions**

41. The timetable for decisions and potential implementation of the changes (subject to the outcome of the secondary public consultation and Cabinet approval) is set out below:

<b>Action</b>	<b>Date</b>
Secondary consultation closes	20 March 2024
Report to the Cabinet with the outcome of the consultation and recommendations	24 May 2024

Implementation: Site closure and part-time opening – subject to operational deliverability	October 2024
Implementation: Christmas Eve Closures	24 December 2024
Implementation: Summer opening hours changes	April 2025

### **Conclusions**

42. This report informs the Committee of the results of the public consultation, sets out the revised proposals and seeks its views as part of the secondary consultation on the change to the part-time opening at Market Harborough RHWS, Shepshed RHWS, and reduced opening days at Kibworth RHWS.

43. The views of the Committee will be reported to the Cabinet in May.

### **Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure**

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

### **Equality Implications**

45. The Equalities Impact Assessment has been updated (Appendix D) to take into account the revised proposals to keep Market Harborough RHWS and Shepshed RHWS open part-time and to reduce opening days at Kibworth RHWS.

46. The comments of the LECG are given at paragraph 28 above.

### **Human Rights Implications**

47. No human rights implications were identified.

### **Environmental Implications**

48. It has been noted that there could be environmental implications from residents driving further to an alternative RHWS should their current nearest site close. However, this has been largely mitigated by the revised proposal to keep Market Harborough RHWS and Shepshed RHWS open part-time. Somerby RHWS has low visitor numbers so its closure is unlikely to have significant environmental implications.



## **Background Papers**

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

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

23 June 2023 - Report to the Cabinet - ‘Final Report of the Scrutiny Review Panel on Recycling and Household Waste Sites’:

<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2023-10/RHWS-Scrutiny-Review-Panel-report-2023.pdf>

24 October 2023 - Report to the Cabinet – ‘Recycling and Household Waste Sites Proposed Consultation’:

<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/documents/s179117/FINAL%20RHWS%20Savings%20Consultation%20Cabinet%20241023.pdf>

9 February 2024 - Report to the Cabinet - Provisional Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024/25-2027/28:

<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=7503>

## **Appendices**

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

Appendix B - Consultation Survey Report

Appendix C - Focus Group Report

Appendix D - Equalities Impact Assessment (second iteration)

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