

Cabinet Meeting on Wednesday 17 May 2023

Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC) Consultation Feedback, Policy Changes, Re-use and HWRC Network Improvements to Date



Cllr Simon Tagg, Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Change said,

“The county council currently provides a network of 14 household waste recycling centres.

The centres are well-used by residents with around 1.6 million visits each year.

Although there are only around 20,000 recorded trade visits we do know that the disposal of large amounts of commercial waste or bulky items can lead to lengthy queues and delays for other households.

In line with many other local authorities, we are now proposing to make changes to limit this type of disposal to improve the experience for residents using the sites.”

Report Summary:

Staffordshire County Council has a statutory duty to provide a Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) network for Staffordshire County Council residents. The current network consists of 14 HWRC's in Staffordshire and the jointly funded site in Warwickshire at Lower House Farm which is managed directly by Warwickshire County Council.

Since the service moved in-house, the service has access to improved data on day-to-day activities. Residents are complaining about queuing on sites mainly the result of Commercial (trade) waste vehicles taking space on the sites and taking considerable time to offload waste. These Commercial (trade) waste operators are not only from Staffordshire, but a significant number are from outside the County and are prepared to travel to the HWRC's as the disposal charges are beneficial to their operations. This has resulted in a significant increase in the disposal of bulky and trade waste, which has increased disposal costs putting pressure on existing budgets. The disposal of this waste including waste from outside Staffordshire is being funded by the Staffordshire County

Council tax payer.

On 10 November 2022, a report to Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members outlined proposed changes for the management of bulky and trade and commercial waste at Staffordshire HWRC's. In addition, consideration was also given to the use of a van permitting or vehicle recognition-based system for Staffordshire County Council residents who wish to use certain types of vehicles to transport household waste to the Staffordshire County Council HWRC network which will also impact traders disposing of waste.

Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee approved a proposal to undertake a public consultation on changes which would impact some of the current HWRC Policies.

The public consultation ran over a 7-week period, the results of which have informed changes to some of the HWRC Policies which are being presented to Cabinet for recommendation to implement.

The Service undertook soft market testing for a re-use operation which included market interest on the provision of an outlet for re-use across the HWRC network. This report provides an update on the outcome and progression of a re-use option post April 2024.

The Service has implemented several improvements across the HWRC network and continues to invest and improve both infrastructure and operational activities to enhance the customer experience.

Recommendations

I recommend that Cabinet:

- a. Note the feedback from the public consultation which have informed recommended HWRC Policy changes.
- b. Approve the recommended HWRC Policy changes.
- c. Authorise the Waste and Sustainability Service to implement the HWRC Policy changes and any legislative changes to be made to HWRC Policies.
- d. Delegate authority to the Director for Economy, Infrastructure and Skills in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Change to implement a new re-use competition process to put in place an operational model that provides a service to the residents of Staffordshire County Council for implementation from April 2024.
- e. Note the improvements made to date on the HWRC network.

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Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC) Consultation Feedback, Policy Changes, Re-use and HWRC Network Improvements to Date

Recommendations of the Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Change

I recommend that Cabinet:

- a. Note the feedback from the public consultation which have informed recommended HWRC Policy changes.
- b. Note the recommended HWRC Policy changes.
- c. Authorise the Director of Economy, Infrastructure and Skills to implement the HWRC Policy changes and any legislative changes to be made to HWRC Policies.
- d. Authorise the Director of Economy, Infrastructure and Skills to progress a re-use solution and approve a suitable option for implementation from April 2024.
- e. Note the improvements made to date on the HWRC network.

Local Member Interest:

N/A

Report of the Director of Economy, Infrastructure and Skills

Reasons for Recommendations:

Background

1. The Council currently provides a network of 14 HWRCs geographically spread across the county and Staffordshire County Council residents also have access to the jointly funded site at Lower House Farm in Warwickshire. The service is well utilised by residents, with approximately 1.6 million visits per annum across the sites in Staffordshire. The service is also used by traders with c20,000 visits being made by registered traders in 2019/20.
2. Currently 42 material streams are accepted at the majority of HWRC sites and the current recycling rate of c64%.

3. The primary function of the HWRC service is to receive household waste from Staffordshire County Council residents and the Council has no statutory duty to provide for the provision of the tipping and disposal of commercial (trade) waste. It should be noted that most of our neighbouring local authorities do not allow traders access to their HWRC networks.
4. Appendix 1 lists surrounding authorities and their commercial (trade) waste and van and trailer management arrangements.
5. Since the service moved in-house, it has access to improved data on day-to-day activities which has identified that there has been a significant increase in the disposal of bulky and trade waste, particularly at its Cannock site (the largest HWRC within the network) which has increased disposal costs putting pressure on existing budgets.
6. There has been minimal capital investment across the network. To self-fund investment in the network from existing budgets, changes to some of the HWRC Policies are being recommended to ensure that Staffordshire County Council residents are not subsidising the disposal of bulky and commercial (trade) waste across its network.
7. Policy changes are required to control the use of the Council's HWRC network and minimise both operational and financial pressures and to reflect operational changes since the network came in-house.
8. Commercial (trade) waste (a non-statutory service) was implemented at Staffordshire's HWRC's by a previous contractor. Apart from Biddulph HWRC, there are currently few restrictions for the disposal of commercial (trade) waste at any of the HWRC sites operated by the Council.
9. Experience on the ground over the last 12 months has indicated that site staff have an extremely challenging task in distinguishing between a householder using an employer, borrowed or hired van for disposing of household waste on an ad hoc basis or a small trader disposing of waste generated as a result of a commercial activity.
10. This has led to the following observed problems:
 - a. Considerable volumes of vans particularly at HWRC sites which are close to county boundaries and therefore are easily accessible for non-Staffordshire County Council residents and commercial (trade) operations.

- b. Extended unloading times for vans leading to traffic queues and inconvenience to the vast majority of Staffordshire County Council residents arriving by car to deposit relatively modest volumes of waste.
 - c. Challenging behaviour from some vans drivers when challenged on payment which leads in some cases to unacceptable levels of confrontation.
 - d. Potential for considerable 'leakage' of trade charging occurring leading to lost revenue.
 - e. Potential for considerable costs being borne by Staffordshire County Council taxpayers for disposal of trade waste from both the Staffordshire area and neighbouring authorities.
 - f. With commercial (trade) waste coming from other authorities it impacts on Staffordshire County Council's commercial (trade) operators as they can be held in queues to offload the waste in the designated disposal points on the sites.
11. Typically, across many Waste Disposal Authorities, the control of vans and cars with trailers, genuinely used by members of the public to deliver household waste to the HWRC network, is managed via a permit and/or a booking system. This allows all households a limited number of visits and once this quota is met then no further visits can be made, unless they pay under the trade scheme or use a vehicle that will not incur the charge.

HWRC Public Consultation

12. In November 2022, Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered a report on the proposed changes for the management of commercial (trade) waste at Staffordshire HWRC's which considers the use of a van permitting or vehicle recognition-based system for Staffordshire County Council residents who wish to use certain types of vehicles to transport household waste to the Staffordshire HWRC network which will also impact traders disposing of waste.
13. Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members agreed to the proposal to consult with Staffordshire County Council residents and businesses on the introduction of a van permitting or vehicle recognition-based solution for residents disposing of household waste and the management commercial (trade) waste via a Members Delegated Decision.

14. The Service worked with colleagues from Communications and Policy and Insight Teams to develop a consultation questionnaire which is shown at Appendix 2.
15. The public consultation ran from 5 December 2022 to 22 January 2023 (over a 7-week period) which included one of the busiest periods for HWRCs.
16. Appendix 3 shows the Household Waste Recycling Centre Consultation Report.

Key Headlines from the Public Consultation

17. 1,002 responses were received, with results statistically robust at a County level.
 - a. Of all survey respondents:
 - i. 97% responded in the capacity as an individual.
 - ii. 4.5% responded in the capacity of a small/medium business.
 - iii. Half are 'regular' users of their Household Recycling Centre.
 - iv. 13.7% (137) are regular users visiting in a van – the key impacted audience.

Public Consultation Policy Options

18. The following Policy options were consulted on:

Policy 4 (Van and Trailer use)

19. A van permitting or vehicle recognition-based system for vans and cars with trailers used by Staffordshire County Council residents disposing of household waste generated from domestic properties:
 - a. Each Staffordshire County Council household will be eligible for say 12 visits per year which will allow the use of a van, car with trailer, camper van etc.
 - b. Cars with trailers to be accepted at all Staffordshire County Council HWRC sites subject to a van permit or vehicle recognition-based system.

Policy 15 (Commercial (Trade) Waste)

20. There were 3 possible options for consideration under this Policy change:
 - a. Staffordshire County Council only business and commercial waste accepted at all sites (except for Biddulph) and increase trade prices

per load for larger vans and pro rata increase when traders use cars, small vans and or trailers.

- b. Staffordshire County Council and non-Staffordshire County Council business and commercial waste accepted at larger sites only and increase trade prices per load for larger vans and pro rata increase when traders use cars, small vans and or trailers.
- c. Staffordshire County Council and non-Staffordshire County Council business and commercial waste accepted at all sites (except for Biddulph) and increase trade prices per load for larger vans and pro rata increase when traders use cars, small vans and or trailers.

Key Messages - Van & Trailer Permits

- 21. Half of respondents stated 12 visits per year should be allowed with a van permit.
- 22. Van users have a higher preference for 12 permits per year - 73% compared to 38% of car users, however this remained a top option across all vehicle types.
- 23. Of the 750 responses analysed within the free text comments, key impacts of a van & trailer permit scheme included:
 - a. Reduced congestion and queues (14%)
 - b. Unfairness as penalising residents with privately owned vans (16%).
 - c. Concerns regarding increased fly tipping (11%).

Key Messages – Commercial (Trade) Waste

- 24. More respondents (60%) supported the option to accept commercial waste from Staffordshire County Council businesses only, at all sites, than any other. This option was most prevalent in Cannock Chase, with 73% compared to 60% overall.
- 25. Respondents favoured prioritising Staffordshire's County boundary for the disposal of trade waste, however some concerns were raised regarding increased fly tipping.

HWRC Policies

- 26. Based on the outcome of the public consultation and revised operational practices, Cabinet is requested to approve the recommended changes to the following HWRC Policies which has led to the existing HWRC Policy document being updated and is attached at Appendix 4:

Policy 4 (Van and Trailer use)

- a. 12 permits to be issued – to be used 12 months from the date of application.
- b. Permits registered to the resident's home address (not the vehicle).
- c. Applicable to certain vehicles and trailers. To aid Staffordshire County Council residents a graphic and description will be available on the website / application form to assist in determining vehicles and / or trailer which will require a permit under the scheme.
- d. Online applications.
- e. A separate process (online) will be put in place for Staffordshire County Council residents using a 'rental' van.
- f. Proposed implementation of 1 September 2023 – subject to discussions with ICT, Governance, Change and Assurance.
- g. Up to 1 month **amnesty** from the date the changes to Policy come into effect, any resident attending a site without a permit will still be able to dispose of their household waste and will be signposted to the online application.

Policy 5 (Non-Staffordshire County Council residents use)

- a. To reflect non-Staffordshire County Council residents use of Staffordshire County Council's HWRC's if they visit with a van and / or trailer.

Policy 6 (Small Traders Waste Disposal Scheme (pilot))

- a. To be removed as it refers to a 'pilot' scheme at 3 sites only.

Policy 15 (Commercial (Trade) Waste) (now Policy 8)

- a. Restricted to Staffordshire County Council businesses only.
- b. Commercial (trade) waste disposal available at all sites for Staffordshire County Council businesses only (excluding Biddulph).
- c. Evidence to be provided (paper copy) Waste Carriers Licence (which will include the address of the business).
- d. Commercial (trade) waste restrictions introduced on Monday 5 June 2023.
- e. A two-month amnesty from the date the change comes into effect, any non-Staffordshire County Council trader attending a site will still be able to dispose of their commercial / trade waste (at the trade waste disposal price) and will be informed that they will no longer be able to dispose of their waste at any Staffordshire County Council HWRC.

Policy 9 (Resident Non-household Waste Disposal)

- a. To be added to advise residents of the materials that are restricted in the number that can be disposed of over a given period of time.

Policy 14 (now Policy 15) (Schools, Village Halls & Charities)

- a. It was proposed to Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee that Policy 14, Schools, and Charities, be amended to reflect easier access to more voluntary / charitable organisations and individuals to Staffordshire County Council's HWRCs. This Policy change was not part of the public consultation.

27. Remaining policies have been updated to refresh contact emails, website links, etc. Appendix 5 lists existing and proposed Policies.

28. DEFRA is currently out to consultation on changes to 'chargeable waste for resident's'. Subject to the consultation outcome, there could potentially be a revision required to Policy 10 (DIY, home improvements, renovation, construction & demolition) to reflect a change in legislation.

Mitigation Against Concerns Raised from the Consultation and Recommended Amendments to Policies

Van & Trailer Permits

29. A clear definition of vehicles and trailers which will require a van permit. Details will be included in an online application and widely communicated on the website.
30. We will enable site staff to be flexible, sensible, and supportive of Staffordshire County Council residents on a case-by-case basis – empowering staff to use their discretion, for example one black bag in a van may not need a permit.
31. Van permitting is becoming the direction of travel for majority of Local Authorities with more Authorities following this course of action, e.g., Devon County Council to help stop commercial waste being deposited at public expense, to reduce queues and congestion.

Commercial (Trade) Waste – Fly Tipping Concerns

32. Whilst concerns about increased fly tipping were raised by some respondents to the consultation there is no evidence from other local authorities that this will be a significant issue. However, if changes are made it is intended to work closely with the District and Borough Council's to monitor fly tipping and assist with appropriate action, including enforcement, as required.
33. Evidence would show that the initial fear that the introduction of similar schemes such as the charging of disposal of certain items at HWRCs and

the introduction of garden waste chargeable collections by some District and Borough Council's would increase fly tipping was unfounded.

34. To raise awareness across the region of changes to commercial (trade) waste, it is proposed to introduce a two-month amnesty from the date the Policy comes into effect. This will mean that any non-Staffordshire County Council trader attending at a site will still be able to dispose of their commercial (trade) waste at the commercial (trade) waste disposal charge and will be informed that they will no longer be able to dispose of their waste at any Staffordshire County Council HWRC.

Communications

35. It is proposed to have an active communications programme including signage on all HWRC sites and on the internet advising of the changes to the Policies and any implications to residents.

Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee Recommendations

36. A report was submitted to Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny on the 27 April 2023 with the following recommendations all of which were approved.
- a. Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee note and comment on the headline results from the Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC) public consultation held on van & trailer permits and commercial (trade) waste Policy changes.
 - b. Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee comment on HWRC Policy change proposals prior to any decision being made by Cabinet.
 - c. Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to comment on the proposal of the introduction of a short application process which would allow local groups such as Scouts, litter picking, voluntary, Village / Church Hall to use the HWRC network to recycle materials.
 - d. Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee to note progress on the provision of an outlet for re-use across the HWRC network.

Re-use

37. At its meeting on 10 November 2022, Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee were advised that the HWRC service was to undertake soft market testing to explore a range of options for its re-use operation post April 2024.

38. Following a soft market testing exercise, it became evident that the market did not exist to provide an alternative re-use delivery model.
39. The Council is working alongside the existing provider to understand the current re-use operation and limitations along with developing an options model for the future of re-use on the HWRC network.
40. Procurement has advised that any process would require advertising the opportunity to deliver a re-use operation as it is a 'competition' and not a procurement exercise.
41. The options model will aim to identify a best value option for Staffordshire County Council residents and charities.
42. With limited market interest, it is recommended that Members approve an Officer Delegated Decision to implement a re-use suitable option from April 2024.

HWRC Network Improvements to Date

43. Cabinet is asked to note some of the improvements which have been made across the HWRC Network since April 2022.
 - a. Purchase of containers to replace non road worthy containers.
 - b. Installation of CCTV on all sites including ANPR.
 - c. Webcam – to be introduced during 2023/24 (discussions ongoing with IGU and ICT).
 - d. Burntwood HWRC service area improvements.
 - e. New weighbridge installed at Leek HWRC.
 - f. Defibrillators – to be distributed to sites.
 - g. Purchase of 2 second hand JCB's to support existing fleet and minimise hire charges across the network.
44. The service will continue to invest in the infrastructure and operations within its existing budget.

Legal Implications

45. Legal Services have not been involved in this project and has not been instructed to consider any possible legal implications for such policy changes. There does not appear to be any legal issues, but without further detail and research, legal services cannot advise or comment.

Resource and Value for Money Implications

46. The significant increase in the disposal of bulky and trade waste, arriving from outside of the County, has increased disposal costs putting pressure on existing Waste budgets. This pressure has limited the amount of capital investment possible across the HWRC network. To self-fund investment in the network from existing Waste budgets, from a financial perspective, changes to some of the HWRC Policies are being recommended. This will ensure that Staffordshire County Council residents are not subsidising the disposal of bulky and commercial (trade) waste across its network. Finance will continue to work closely with the service to maximise opportunities for investment in the HWRC network moving forwards.

Climate Change Implications

47. By restricting commercial (trade) waste to Staffordshire County Council businesses only there will be a reduction in carbon miles from businesses operating outside of Staffordshire who travel into the County to dispose of their waste.

48. With the restrictions to the number of visits for van and trailer use it is envisaged that residents will maximise the amount of household waste being transported in a single journey.

49. The HWRC sites are designated as 'anti-idling' zones. As a result of policy changes, the number of vans, trailers and commercial (trade) waste will be reduced leading to less queueing and resulting in residents able to observe and comply with 'anti-idling'.

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

Appendix 1 - Surrounding Authorities and their commercial (trade) waste and van and trailer management arrangements

Appendix 2 - Consultation Questionnaire

Appendix 3 - Household Waste Recycling Centre Consultation Report

Appendix 4 - Revised HWRC Policy Document

Appendix 5 - Existing and proposed Policies

Background Documents

Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee Report – 10 November 2022

Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee Report – 27 April 2023

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