

Lancashire County Council

Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday, 21st December, 2011 at 4.30 pm in Cabinet Room 'C' - County Hall, Preston

Present:

County Councillor John Shedwick (Chair)

County Councillors

R Bailey	M Iqbal
Mrs R Blow	P Malpas
S Chapman	Mrs L Oades
C Crompton	D Westley
M Devaney	T Winder
K Ellard	B Winlow

County Councillor R Bailey attended in place of County Councillor D O'Toole
County Councillor R Blow attended in place of County Councillor P Steen
County Councillor M Iqbal attended in place of County Councillor J Hanson
County Councillor T Winder attended in place of County Councillor Mrs F Craig-Wilson

1. Apologies

None

2. Officers and Witnesses

The Chair welcomed County Councillor Albert Atkinson, Deputy Leader, along with officers from the Environment Directorate - Jo Turton, Executive Director, Phil Barrett, Director of Environment and Public Protection Services, and Steve Scott, Head of Waste Management.

The Chair also welcomed County Councillor Val Wilson, signatory to the request for the special meeting, and witnesses Councillor Joe Cooney, Pendle Borough Council, Mr John Duckworth, Chair of the Great Harwood regeneration Board, Councillor Jackie Oakes, Rossendale Borough Council and Mr Robert Lobell, Save the Tip In Garstang Campaigner.

3. Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

None

4. Purpose of the meeting

Josh Mynott, Committee Support Team Leader, explained that this meeting had been called under the county council "Call In" procedures. It had been called at the request of five county councillors, named in the report, and the purpose was to discuss whether this Committee wished to formally ask the Deputy Leader to reconsider the decision made on 15 December 2011 to close the HWRCs at Garstang, Great Harwood, Colne and Bacup.

5. Review of Lancashire's Household Waste Recycling Centres Provision - Request for Call In

The Chair invited the witnesses to present to the committee.

Councillor Joe Cooney, Pendle Borough Council, accepted that difficult financial decisions needed to be made, but the decision to close Colne was wrong on several grounds. He highlighted that the Colne site was the fourth busiest in the county, and that it is well-sited, with the alternatives Barnoldswick and Burnley having access difficulties. He asked that alternatives be considered, including reducing opening hours and days or closing the other site in Pendle at Barnoldswick.

John Duckworth, Chair, Great Harwood Regeneration Board drew attention to the strong feeling against the closure in the local area. He suggested that options for maintaining the site on a commercial basis could have been explored with local firms. He noted that significant use of the site was made by people outside Hyndburn, and that this helped to draw people in to the area. He also questioned the extent to which doorstep collections could replace the HWRCs for certain items.

Councillor Jackie Oakes, Rossendale Borough Council, felt that the environmental impact alone was sufficient reason to reconsider the decision, in terms of increased travel times, CO2 emissions and fly tipping. A cross party Rossendale Borough Council task group had considered the consultation and agreed that, if economic necessity meant one of the HWRCs in the district must close, it should be Haslingden, on the basis of the difficulty of access, the use by people from outside Lancashire and the difficulties of the county council securing the lease on the Haslingden site. She advised that, to her knowledge, no discussion had taken place with Rossendale BC about the lease, and certainly no agreement, which, in her view, made the decision incorrect, being based on false information.

Robert Lobell, from STING (Save the Tip In Garstang), proposed an alternative, which would be to reduce opening hours at 8 sites instead of closing four sites completely. He noted that 22,000 responses to the consultation had been made, virtually all opposing the proposal, and also that the original savings anticipated of £800,000 had now reduced to just £520,000. He felt that the decision demonstrated that the county council had not properly considered all of the

possible alternatives to closure, and therefore requested that this be reconsidered.

County Councillor Atkinson was invited to respond to the points raised. He confirmed that the original decision to close four sites had been made as part of the budget in February 2011. He confirmed that other options had been explored at length, including talking to private providers and reducing opening times, but neither had proved viable. He also confirmed that 94% of the population remained within 6 miles of a HWRC, and that improvements in kerbside collections, driven by significant funding from the county council, meant that the pattern use of HWRCs was changing, and most people used them infrequently, and could plan journeys to avoid extra emissions. He also confirmed the findings presented in the report indicating no link between the closure of HWRCs and fly tipping.

The committee heard from officers to explain the background and parameters of the review. It was made clear that the savings of £520,000 were a minimum estimate, and the final figure was anticipated to be higher. On the question of reducing opening hours or days, it was highlighted that it would require 3-day opening at 8 sites, meaning one district of Lancashire having no full time HWRC and a generally greater impact on the service. This proposal would also bring potential additional security and licensing costs.

On specific issues raised, the details of the access difficulties at the Colne site were explained, and it was also noted that the measurements were in tonnages, so no account was taken of where users were coming from to bring waste to Great Harwood or any of the other sites. It was confirmed that discussions over the lease at Haslingden had taken place and agreement was close, as confirmed by exchanges between the county council and borough council legal teams.

The committee were invited to consider the matter. The main points of the discussion were:

The committee queried the long term trend on use of HWRCs, as some statistics appeared to indicate a general downward trend in tonnages. It was confirmed that, across Lancashire as a whole, the figure had been very stable for around 10 years, and no change was anticipated.

The different recycling regimes of district councils was also raised, and it was confirmed that, largely driven by county council funding, all districts were contributing to delivering full "three stream recycling" to 98% of Lancashire residents.

The committee queried the impact of the previous round of closures. It was explained that, whilst no official figures for tonnages had been analysed, no problems had been reported by any districts in terms of collection rates or fly tipping.

On being put to the vote, the Committee decided that it would not request the Deputy Leader reconsider the decision made on 15 December 2011 to close the HWRCs at Garstang, Great Harwood, Colne and Bacup.

Resolved: That the Scrutiny Committee do not request the Deputy Leader reconsider the decision made on 15 December 2011 to close the HWRCs at Garstang, Great Harwood, Colne and Bacup.

6. Date of Next Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting of the committee will be held on Friday 13 January 2012 at 10am at County Hall, Preston.

I M Fisher
County Secretary and Solicitor

County Hall
Preston