

Internal Scrutiny Committee

Meeting to be held on Friday, 16 November 2018

Electoral Division affected:
(All Divisions);

Household Waste Recycling Centres

Contact for further information:

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Executive Summary

A review of the Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) service has been conducted to consider operating efficiency and financial savings following its transfer back in-house in April 2018.

The purpose of this report is to provide information on a number of proposed changes as a result of this review in four key areas:

- Opening hours and days open
- Staffing levels
- Limiting or charging for non-household waste
- Cross border waste

Recommendation

The Internal Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider the content of the report and to provide any comment for consideration in relation to this review.

Background and Advice

The waste service has reviewed the council's HWRC service provision following its transfer back in-house in April 2018 with a view to achieving efficiencies and potential cost savings.

HWRC costs consist predominantly in three main areas. These are staff costs, transport and the cost of treating, processing or disposing of waste. Transport is delivered under contract by a third party. The contract only commenced in April and efficiency and cost factors were considered during procurement. The actual cost of treating, processing or disposing of waste is set by materials markets. In effect therefore the main areas where financial efficiencies can be achieved from the service, that haven't previously been put forward, is staff costs and either reducing the amount of waste delivered or charging for its handling - where it is not waste that we are statutorily obliged to accept free of charge.

On this basis the review assessed the following four main areas:

- Opening hours and days open
- Staffing levels
- Limiting or charging for non-household waste
- Cross border waste

The information in Table 1 provides a useful reference against which to consider the issues.

Table 1

0 to 5,000 tonnes		5,000 to 9,000 tonnes		9,000 tonnes to 14,000	
HWRC planned staffing level (weekdays, weekends)	Annual tonnage	HWRC planned staffing level (weekdays, weekends)	Annual tonnage	HWRC planned staffing level (weekdays, weekends)	Annual tonnage
Longridge (3,3)	2,859	Altham (3,4)	6,491	Preston (4,6)	9,697
Barnoldswick (3,3)	2,995	Skelmersdale (3,4)	6,678	Chorley (4,5)	10,579
Clitheroe (3,3)	3,440	Lytham (4,5)	8,242	Burnley (4,6)	11,148
Burscough (3,4)	4,507	Fleetwood (3,4)	8,369	Lancaster (5,6)	11,768
Carnforth (3,4)	4,527			Farington (5,7)	13,116
Haslingden (3,3)	4,536				

Opening hours and days open

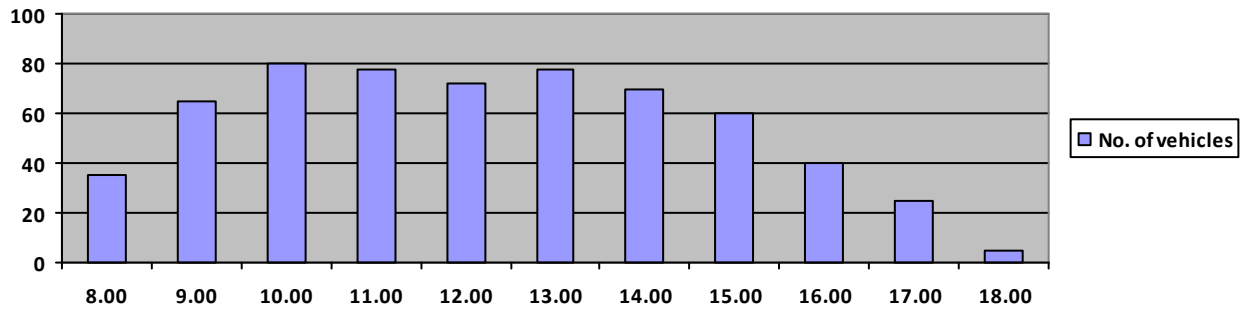
Current HWRC opening hours are:

08:00 to 19:00 April – September

08:00 to 17:00 October – March

These hours are disproportionate in comparison to other authorities. In addition, they are inefficient financially as staff currently only work up to 4 days per week due to the total number of hours being worked in summer months. The result being that a greater overall number of staff are required to cover the service than would be necessary with lower fixed hours all year round. This brings additional cost associated with equipment, training and overheads. The current hours are also such that there is a greater reliance on casual staff than would otherwise be required.

Traffic data collected at each HWRC shows that visitor numbers are comparatively low between 8.00am and 9.00am and after 5.00pm. The graph below shows vehicle data for a mid-range tonnage HWRC (Fleetwood). This profile is typical across all facilities.



Fleetwood HWRC – Average daily vehicle numbers (June/July)

The typical weekly hours for the majority of staff is 40 hours over a 4 day week. The most efficient opening hours for the facility without impacting staff hours would therefore be to open 8 hours per day thus facilitating a 40 hour week over 5 days.

On this basis, and given the demonstrably reduced usage during the peripheral hours, the review recommends that opening hours are changed to 9.00am to 5.00pm throughout the year.

In terms of the days HWRCs open there are numerous combinations and options but in essence 5 day opening would be the most efficient given that this would facilitate the lowest number of staff required. However, there are concerns that on busier HWRCs, this may lead to congestion and ultimately reduce the amount of recycling activity, potentially counteracting any saving made from reduced opening.

On quieter centres it is considered that 5 day opening could be achieved with minimal impact on operations. The council has operated some HWRCs on the basis of 4 day opening in the past. The review concluded therefore that all facilities that receive on average less than 5000 tonnes per annum should be changed to 5 day opening.

This would involve the following facilities:

- Longridge
- Barnoldswick
- Clitheroe
- Burscough
- Carnforth
- Haslingden

In addition, it is considered that Skelmersdale HWRC should also be open 5 days on the basis that there are two facilities in the district of West Lancashire and the two facilities are relatively close to each other. The majority of Lancashire's districts only have one facility. The days that Skelmersdale and Burscough close should be staggered such that West Lancashire district has a HWRC available 7 days per week.

Staffing levels

The current planned staffing level on each facility is provided in Table 1.

For safety purposes the minimum number of staff operating a HWRC at any given time must be two. To allow for potential absences the minimum planned staffing level is generally three.

In the first instance wholesale reductions in staffing levels were not considered due to the potential to impact on recycling levels. The review assessed each facility on the basis of tonnage received and the ratio of staff to the average number of vehicles visiting the facility. In general it was considered that the majority of staffing levels were appropriate but some inconsistencies were highlighted.

The review suggested that the provision of 4 staff at Burscough and Carnforth at weekend should be reduced to 3 on the basis that the ratio of vehicles to staff at weekend does not warrant an increase from weekdays. Similarly at Preston HWRC that the provision of 6 staff be reduced to 5 on the basis that the increase in visitors at weekend warrant one rather than two additional staff.

In terms of Lytham HWRC, the basis of current staffing provision seems inconsistent with both tonnages and vehicle numbers and the reason for this is unknown. For consistency it is recommended that both weekday and weekend provision is reduced by one at Lytham to provide 3 on weekdays and 4 at weekends.

Limiting or charging for non-household wastes

There are some waste types that are accepted at the HWRCs which are not deemed to be household waste and therefore there is no obligation on the council to accept them. The most significant ones being tyres and gas bottles. Our research showed that many other authorities do charge for these and there are a wide range of different rates and means of doing so.

Around 23,000 tyres are delivered to HWRCs per annum and these currently cost around £0.90 per tyre to process. To recover the cost of processing would realise income of around £21,700.

We currently accept about 7000 gas bottles per annum. The cost of disposing of these varies by the type of bottle with some being collected free of charge. As such there could be dispute as to whether charges could lawfully be applied to these, and any charging scheme for specific gas bottles would be extremely difficult to administer.

Along with any opportunity to limit the amount of these wastes that householders can deliver to HWRCs both of the above options are likely to carry significant administrative burden. More importantly, management of delivery of these wastes on the HWRC would detract from the other duties of site staff; at a time when the facilities may be becoming busier due to reduced opening.

There is a risk that this may result in a reduction in the amount of waste recycled at the facilities, the cost of which could negate any saving made from limiting or charging for the tyres or gas bottles. On this basis, following review, it is not recommended that any additional limiting or charging options are introduced at this time.

Cross border waste

A number of the HWRCs often receive waste from householders who live outside Lancashire. This has been exacerbated in recent years as neighbouring authorities have implemented reduced opening and site closures. For example, vehicle numbers at Fleetwood on a Thursday, when neighbouring Blackpool's facility at Bispham is closed, demonstrate an average 10% increase in visitors in comparison to other weekdays. That is the equivalent of around 60 additional vehicles.

Recent survey work suggests that around 11% of the waste delivered to Chorley HWRC originates from outside Lancashire; with the reduced opening of HWRCs in Wigan being notable. The annual cost of transporting and disposing of waste from Chorley is in excess of £600,000 per annum.

Previous surveys have indicated that around a third of all of the waste at the Carnforth HWRC comes from addresses in Cumbria. However, we also know that other authorities, Blackburn and Merseyside for example, have concerns about Lancashire residents using their facilities.

Preventing cross border waste is notoriously cumbersome. Some authorities use automated number plate recognition systems, some have permit/registration schemes and others simply rely on asking for evidence of address. However, these are all time consuming and can lead to congestion. They are also deeply unpopular with residents. Furthermore, some of our HWRCs simply do not lend themselves to some of the options due to access restrictions.

Due to the complexity of the issue of cross border waste, and options for preventing it, robust survey information needs to be gathered over a prolonged period. More detailed consideration and understanding of the potential financial impacts of cross border waste and a separate review of the options for, and costs of, preventing it is required before recommendations can be made.

Summary

In summary, a number of changes are proposed including the change of all HWRC opening hours to 9.00am to 5.00pm all year round and reducing the operation of 7 (of the 15) HWRCs to 5 days per week. For consistency across the service a small reduction in staff numbers is proposed on 4 HWRCs. These proposals will provide a saving on staffing costs of £734,000.

Due to the relatively small savings available, and the implications of delivery, it is not recommended that any additional limiting of, or charging for, non-household wastes is introduced.

The issue of cross border waste has been considered but needs more robust data to be obtained over a prolonged period, and subsequent detailed financial analysis, before recommendations in this respect can be made.

Consultations

N/A

Note: Consultation with public, staff and unions will take place as part of the decision making process.

Implications

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

Financial

The service changes outlined in the report are expected to provide a salary saving of £734,000 and the saving is included in the service challenge proposals.

Risk management

Financial - The proposals are subject to consultation with public, staff and unions. Equality impact assessments will be required.

Staffing – Current staffing numbers suggest that there are around 90 contracted staff (who work a mix of 2, 3 or 4 days) and 30 contracted casual staff. It is anticipated that delivery of the service on the proposed basis would require 74 staff with the possibility of up to an additional 10 FTE to cover absences. There is therefore the potential for redundancies as a result of the recommended changes.

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
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N/A