

Local Members' Interest

N/A

Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee – 4th April 2018

Review of Charging for Non-Household Waste at Staffordshire's Household Waste Recycling Centres

Recommendation

1. That the Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee note the content of the impact analysis and consider the impact of introducing charging for non-household waste at Household Waste Recycling Centres in Staffordshire.

Report of Cllr Gill Heath, Cabinet Member for Communities

Summary

2. The Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee has requested a review of the observable impacts of charging for some types of non-household waste at Staffordshire's Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC) introduced in November 2016.
3. The following report provides an overview of the authority's HWRC service and the notable observable impacts of charging for some types of non-household waste following the first 12 months of implementation. The report provides a reminder of the background on the decision to charge; an overview of customer feedback, opinion and response; provides detail around the financial, waste disposal tonnage, and site usage impacts; and considers the relationship with fly tipping in Staffordshire.

Report

Background

4. The decision to start charging for some non-household waste at Staffordshire's HWRCs was included in the 2014/15 Medium Term Financial Strategy. This was considered through Corporate Review, Cabinet and Full Council between late January and mid-February 2014. The authority developed a detailed proposal to introduce charges for certain types of non-household waste and presented this to Cabinet in October 2016. Following a call-in period the proposal was approved and charging at Staffordshire's HWRCs commenced in November 2016.
5. The Government's Litter Strategy was launched in April 2017. This document presented, amongst a large range of matters, views on the charges that a number of local authorities have introduced for the disposal of some types of waste at HWRCs. The Government has committed to reviewing current guidance and to clearly define what can and cannot be charged for. Early indications were the

revised guidance would be issued in December 2017; no revised timescales have been presented.

6. Prior to introducing charging, the Authority sought legal advice over which materials could be charged for. The authority believes the charges in place at Staffordshire's HWRCs are legal and appropriate. A commitment to review the charging scheme has been made when new Government guidance is issued.

Overview of HWRC Provision

7. Our 14 site HWRC service offers a convenient, accessible and legal provision for the disposal of both household and non-household waste, including waste from Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) through our Small Traders Waste Disposal Scheme.
8. We accept and provide segregated disposal for a wide range of materials at our sites. These materials include wood, paint, bulky waste, tyres, batteries, small waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE), soil, rubble, asbestos, lightbulbs, household chemicals, metal, cardboard, glass, plasterboard, rigid plastics, mattresses and fridges / freezers.
9. Re-usable items can be donated on all of our HWRCs to our charity partner Katherine House Hospice, which operates the Re-use Shop on Cannock HWRC. This partnership arrangement benefits the local community in offering the sale of re-usable items at affordable prices, produces income for the charity to support the funding of its services for the community, and helps us all in reducing the amount of waste produced and requiring alternative disposal in Staffordshire.
10. The HWRC service contributes to our strategic ambition to achieve zero-waste to landfill, with 72% of all waste disposed of on our sites currently being re-used, recycled or recovered, with a significant proportion of the remainder, which cannot be either re-used or recycled, used to produce energy for the National Grid at our Energy Recovery Facilities. Our current landfill rate in Staffordshire stands at approximately 2%, whereas, nationally, 16% of all waste handled by local authorities was landfilled in 2016/2017, demonstrating how Staffordshire is excelling in reducing waste to landfill.

Tonnage of Non-Household Waste and Financial Impact of the Charges

11. The charges introduced only apply to some types of non-household waste (a definitive list has been provided in Appendix I to this report). These are collectively referred to under the categories of tyres, plasterboard, and soil & rubble (inert).
12. For context, in the year 2015-2016 (the last financial year prior to the introduction of the charges), the total volume of all waste disposed of via our HWRC contract was 80,000 tonnes, with 21% being soil & rubble, plasterboard and tyres. During the year 2016-2017, in which charges were introduced part way through the year, a total volume of 81,000 tonnes of all waste was disposed of, with 16% being soil & rubble, plasterboard and tyres.

13. As anticipated, we have observed a significant decrease in the volumes of waste being disposed of at our sites for which a charge is made, as shown in figure 1. We appreciate that some residents may choose alternative disposal, such as skip hire, for larger volumes of waste, or may decide that they can re-use some items, rather than disposing of them. We also appreciate that tradespeople, who may have previously posed as householders, may now be using appropriate commercial disposal options.

	Soil & Rubble (Inert)	Plasterboard	Tyres
Nov 2015 – Oct 2016	15336.39	612.06	257.32
Nov 2016 – Oct 2017	3316.59	214.98	80.53
% difference	-78%	-65%	-69%

Figure 1: Total tonnes of each category of non-household waste, of which we charge for disposal of some items, by year. Please note that this tonnage includes some non-chargeable items. The figure compares the year prior to charges being introduced, and the first 12 months of charges being made.

14. The charges made for disposal for each category of chargeable waste are as follows:

- a. Soil & rubble = £3 per standard rubble bag 76 x 96cm, or unit (e.g. a bath tub)
- b. Plasterboard = £4 per standard rubble bag 76 x 96cm, or 180 x 90cm sheet
- c. Tyres = £4 each

15. In the period November 2016 – October 2017, a contribution of £200,351.20 towards the cost of overheads and disposal of these waste types was raised through the charges.

Site Usage

16. Between November 2015 and October 2016 there were around 1.5 million visits to our HWRCs. During the 12 months following this (November 2016 to October 2017) there were around 1.4 million visits made. 2.5% of visits to our sites included the disposal of chargeable non-household waste.

17. It was anticipated that the introduction of charging would reduce the volume of traders posing as householders in place of accessing the Small Traders Waste Disposal Scheme; the observable reduction in the volume of site users may be representative of this positive impact. We have also experienced a year of reduced green waste tonnage due to a comparatively poor growing season; this may have also affected the number of journeys to the sites householders have needed to make.

Cash Payment

18. The Authority fully assessed the risk of accepting cash on the HWRC's prior to introducing the charges. It was considered storing cash on the sites exposes the sites to security risks, risks that can only be mitigated by not accepting or having to deal with cash. Card payments can also be processed much quicker, thus

reducing time spent on site for residents, reducing the risk of traffic queuing and ensuring the service to residents continues to run efficiently.

19. 13 complaints were received in the period November 2016 – October 2017 relating to the inability to pay by cash, the distribution of these is presented in figure 2.

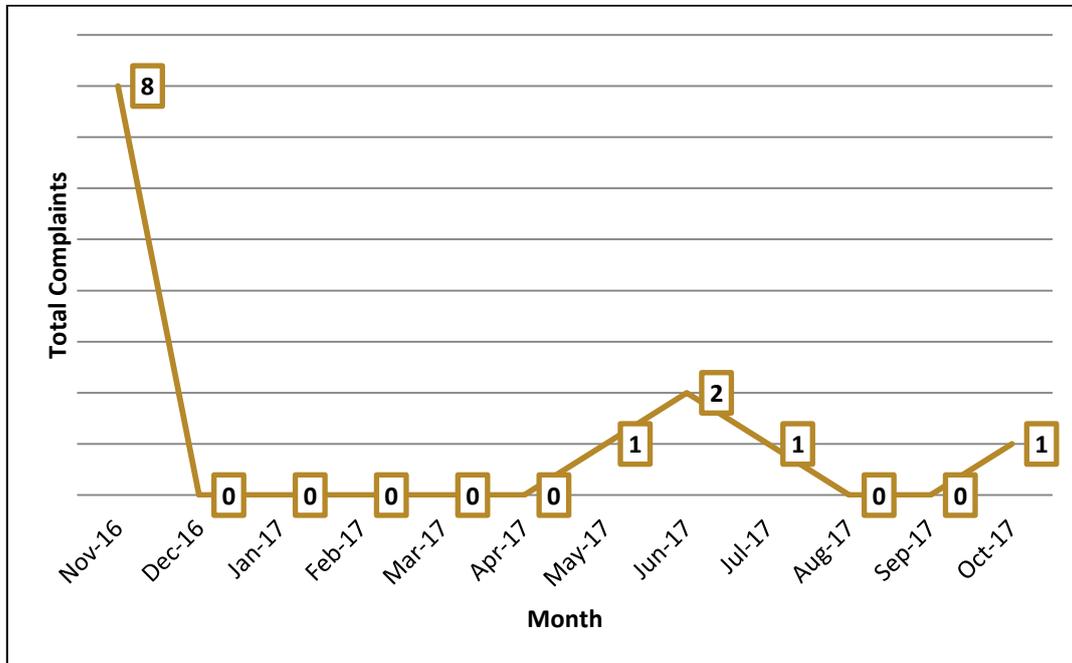


Figure 2: Complaints Received Relating to Inability to make Payment with Cash

Customer Feedback

20. Every year a customer satisfaction survey is completed for the HWRCs. This survey is conducted on and off sites each financial year by an independent surveyor. The questionnaire includes a range of questions about the quality of service provided on the site.
21. The overall customer satisfaction score in 2015/2016, prior to the charges being introduced, was 89.5%. In 2016/2017, the year in which charges were introduced mid-year, the customer satisfaction score was 88.8%. And whilst at the present moment unverified, the customer satisfaction score for 2017/2018 has been presented as 94.5%.
22. Complaints were received from the public when charging was introduced, with 51 made in the first month. Thereafter complaints did not exceed 15 in a month and in the last six months there have been 10 in total.
23. We have responded to customer feedback following the introduction of charging for non-household waste; providing a comprehensive list of chargeable items to improve awareness of the items we charge for, and have increased signage on sites. Site Operatives have received additional training to help address some of the uncertainties raised by both staff and customers alike during the first few months of implementation. Site Operatives have been provided with pocket

guides to support decision making for charges and conversations with customers. These have bedded in well with few instances of customer concern being reported in the months following.

Fly Tipping

24. Prior to implementing the charging scheme the Authority liaised with a number of other Local Authorities with established charging schemes. The evidence provided by those Authorities indicated that there was either no increase in fly tipping incidents, or there was a small increase, which shortly returned to similar levels experienced before the charging scheme was introduced.
25. The Authority has been working closely with the District and Borough Councils to monitor fly tipping incidences. Fly tipping incidents fluctuate monthly, in terms of the types of materials tipped and the quantity.
26. The detailed data is presented in the appendix and is summarised below:
 - a. Some Authorities have reported an average decline in fly tipping incidents since charging, whilst others experienced an increase in the quarter following charging before experiencing reduced, or reverting back to similar, levels to those seen prior to charging.
 - b. All Local Authorities experienced a decline in fly tipping rates between April - June 2017 and October-December 2017 (noting no data for Tamworth has been submitted for the Oct-Dec period) compared to the previous quarter.
 - c. Small scale incidents have shown no significant increase. The number of incidents in October-December and January – March 2017 were slightly above the trend. This dropped the following quarter, with the lowest rate recorded for at least 2 years.
 - d. Large scale fly tipping incidents are most likely to be related to criminal operations on a commercial scale and have no potential link to the charging at the HWRCs. Large scale fly tipping incidents have been rising over the last 2 years.
 - e. Fly tipping incidents are broken down by material type. The HWRC scheme only charges for some types of non-household waste. White goods and 'other household waste' form a large proportion of fly tipped waste and should not be considered as a consequence of the charging scheme as these items continue to be accepted free of charge. With the exception of 'other household waste' the fly tipping rates for each stream have shown no significant changes. 'Other household waste' had a large increase in Jan-March 2017, although this fell to below average levels the following quarter.

Conclusion

27. Charges for some types of non-household waste at our HWRCs have applied to 2.5% of our site users. The volume of complaints received has significantly

decreased over the time period covered in the report, and represents a very small proportion of our customers. Customer satisfaction with our HWRC services has increased from 89.5% to 94.5% over the last 3 years. Our investments in training, communication and operational management have been successful in contributing to this improved satisfaction. There is no indication of an increase in fly tipping incidents as a result of the charging scheme, and the Authority continues to work with the District and Borough councils to monitor reported fly tipping incidents. On publication of any further guidance from Government relating to charging for non-household waste at HWRCs, we are committed to reviewing the scheme.

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Appendices/Background papers

Appendix A – Charges Applied for Some Types of Non-Household Waste

Appendix B – Fly Tipping Analysis