

Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Thursday, 27 April 2023

Household Waste Recycling Centres – Outcome of the Public Consultation and Policy Changes for 2023/24

Recommendations

I recommend that:

- 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.

Local Member Interest:

N/A

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

Summary

What is the Overview and Scrutiny Committee being asked to do and why?

1. At its meeting on 10 November 2022, Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members received a report on forward investment, Policy review and management of re-use items. Members, amongst other matters, were asked to consider potential changes to bulky and commercial waste disposal which would impact some Staffordshire residents and businesses who visit the HWRC network.

2. At its meeting on 10 November 2022, Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee stated that they felt that a change to the management of trade waste was required, and the Option A as detailed in the report was their preference, but it was agreed that a public consultation should be undertaken to determine the views of Staffordshire County Council residents and businesses prior to any changes being made.
3. Following the conclusion of the public consultation, Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to comment on the headline results and confirm their steer on HWRC Policy change recommendations prior to any decision being taken by Cabinet.
4. Further to the discussion held at the Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 10 November 2022, Members are 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, etc. to access the HWRC network to recycle materials.
5. Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee to note findings of the soft market testing and market interest on the provision of an outlet for re-use across the HWRC network and the proposal to seek Officer Delegated Decision to implement a suitable option for implementation from April 2024.

Report

Background

6. 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 recorded visits being made by registered traders in 2019/20.
7. Currently 42 material streams are accepted at the majority of HWRC sites and the current recycling rate of c64%
8. It should be noted that 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.

9. The HWRC service is managed by an existing Policy document which details how the service is managed and run. The document consists of 16 Policies and was last reviewed in 2013 and is attached as Appendix 1.
10. A report was presented to Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 10 November 2022 which outlined the forward investment requirements and the need for Policy review in certain areas. Members were asked to consider proposed changes to HWRC Policies for the disposal of bulky and commercial (trade) waste and local community and charitable organisations.
11. Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed that a public consultation should be undertaken to determine Staffordshire County Council's residents and businesses preferred options and the decision to commence a public consultation was formally made via the Member Delegated Decision process.
12. A public consultation took place between 5 December 2022 to 22 January 2023. A copy of the consultation questionnaire is attached at Appendix 2.

Public Consultation Outcome

13. The public were consulted on options which impact on existing Policies 4 and 15 namely van and trailer use and commercial (trade) waste.
14. The HWRC public consultation ran over a 7-week period which was over one of the busiest periods for HWRCs. Key Headlines are shown at Appendix 3.
15. 1,002 responses were received, with results statistically robust at a county level.
Of all survey respondents:
 - a. 97% responded in the capacity as an individual.
 - b. 4.5% responded in the capacity of a small/medium business.
 - c. Half are 'regular' users of their Household Recycling Centre.
 - d. 13.7% (137) are regular users visiting in a van – the key impacted audience.

Key Messages - Van & Trailer Permits

16. Half of respondents stated 12 visits per year should be allowed with a van permit.

17. 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.
18. 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

19. Of the three options presented in the public consultation (which mirrored those discussed by Members at their meeting on the 10 November) more respondents (60%) supported the option (Option A) to accept commercial waste from Staffordshire businesses only (administration area of Staffordshire County Council) at all sites, than any other. This option was most prevalent in Cannock Chase, with 73% compared to 60% overall.
20. Respondents favoured prioritising Staffordshire County Council's boundary for the disposal of trade waste, however some concerns were raised regarding increased fly tipping.

Concerns raised and potential mitigation

Van & Trailer Permits

21. It is proposed that there would be a clear definition of vehicles and trailers which will require a van permit. Full details would be included in an online application and effectively communicated.
22. It is proposed that site staff would be empowered to be supportive of Staffordshire County Council residents and to make appropriate decisions when faced with exceptional circumstances.
23. As van permitting is becoming the direction of travel for majority of Waste Disposal Authorities it is intended that lessons learnt from other authorities would be used to shape the final solution for Staffordshire County Council.

Commercial (Trade) Waste

24. If it is agreed to make changes to the commercial (trade) waste Policy, it is proposed to introduce a two-month amnesty for non-Staffordshire

County Council area traders to allow time for any new arrangements to be fully communicated.

Fly Tipping

25. 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 Councils to monitor fly tipping and assist with appropriate action, including enforcement, as required.
26. 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 Councils would increase fly tipping was unfounded.
27. It is proposed to introduce a two-month amnesty from the date the Policy comes into effect, any non-Staffordshire County Council area traders 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

28. If changes are introduced, 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.

Policy Changes and Next Steps

29. Following the discussions held on the 10 November 2022, Members are asked to review their previously stated preference in the light of the key headlines and messages from the HWRC public consultation on existing Policies 4 (Van and Trailer Use) and 15 (Commercial (Trade) Waste) prior to any decision being made by Cabinet.
30. At the Prosperous Staffordshire Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on the 10 November 2022, Members asked for Policy 14 – Use by Charity Organisations to be reviewed. This has been completed and a revised Policy 15 is attached as Appendix 4. Members are asked to comment on the changes prior to a formal change being approved by Cabinet.

Re-use Public Consultation Update

31. At its meeting on 10 November 2022, Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee were presented with an update on current re-use arrangements with Katharine House Hospice (KHH) and the proposal to undertake a separate public consultation on future re-use options during 2023/24.
32. Following a soft market testing exercise, there are concerns that the market is unable to provide a range of options for the Council to undertake a public consultation.
33. 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.
34. The options model will aim to identify a best value option for Staffordshire residents and charities. With limited market interest, it is proposed to seek Officer Delegated Decision to implement a suitable option from April 2024.
35. 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.
36. It is envisaged that a 'competitive' exercise would take between 2 to 3 months, which allows 30 days for an advert.
37. Consideration should be given to the demobilisation of the existing operator and mobilisation for the incoming operator – possibly 3 months – requiring the competitive process to commence in September 2023.

Link to Strategic Plan

38. The provision of suitable waste disposal arrangements is key to a number of the Outcomes in Staffordshire County Council's Strategic Plan namely to be healthier and happier.
39. The proposals in this report link to the principles contained in the Strategic Plan including ensuring that Climate Change is considered in all that we do.

Link to Other Overview and Scrutiny Activity

40. The Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee received a Forward Investment, Policy Review and Re-use Report on 10 November 2022 and an Insourcing Update and Potential Changes to the Management of Re-use Items Report on 16 September 2021.

Community Impact

N/A

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Existing HWRC Policies Document

Appendix 2 – Consultation Questionnaire

Appendix 3 – Headline Results from the HWRC Public Consultation

Appendix 4 – Policy 15 – Use by Charity Organisations (replacing existing Policy 14)

Background Documents:

Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee Report – 10 November 2022

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