

Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee Thursday 28 March 2024

Household Waste Recycling Centres Update

Recommendation(s)

I recommend that:

- a. Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee review and make comment on the implementation of a van & trailer permit and commercial (trade) waste Policy changes including the introduction of a short application process to allow local groups such as Scouts, litter picking, voluntary, Village / Church Hall to use the HWRC Network to recycle materials.
- b. Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee to review and make comment on investment to date and further improvements required on the HWRC Network.
- c. Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee to review progress on the provision of an outlet for re-use across the HWRC Network.

Local Member Interest:

N/A

Report of Councillor 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 received a report which outlined future significant financial investment required on the HWRC Network over the next five years and the opportunities to self-fund the investment from within existing budgets and modifications to Policies.
2. At its meeting on 23 April 2023, Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee received a report on the results from the HWRC public consultation for the introduction of van & trailer permits and the restrictions of commercial (trade) waste Policy changes. The report included a proposal to introduce a short application process for local

community and voluntary groups to use the HWRC Network as an extension to the existing charity arrangements.

3. Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to review and make comment on the outcome of the Policy changes and operational impact on the HWRC Network and service users.
4. Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to review and make comment on HWRC Network improvements to date.
5. Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to review and make comment progress on the provision of an outlet for re-use across the HWRC Network.

Report

Background

6. In March 2022, the HWRC operational network was transferred from an outsourced to an 'in-house' service delivery model. Since March 2022, numerous reports have been presented to Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee to update and seek support for changes to operational practices and procedures across the network.
7. Recommendations were considered by Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee namely to introduce HWRC Policy changes including a van and trailer permitting system, restricting commercial (trade) waste to Staffordshire businesses only and a scheme for voluntary / charitable groups to have easier access to Staffordshire HWRCs.
8. These were considered and approved by Cabinet on 17 May 2023.
9. 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 3,047 recorded visits being made by registered traders in 2023 (January – December). Compared to 8,366 in 2022.
10. Currently 42 material streams are accepted at the majority of HWRC sites and the current recycling rate of c65%
11. 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.

Commercial (Trade) Waste Policy Changes

12. On 5 June 2023, restrictions on the disposal of commercial (trade) waste from businesses outside of Staffordshire was introduced (a 2-month amnesty period was applied to allow businesses to find alternative legal disposal routes to reduce fly tipping concerns).
13. In November 2022, the report to Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee contained appendices (Appendix 1), which showed the increase in tonnages of the disposal of commercial (trade) and bulky waste. The report stated that *'As an example, bulky tonnage from Cannock (the largest site across the Network) has increased from 1,505 tonnes in 2017/18 to 8,826 tonnes in 2021/22. This increase of 7,321 tonnes has increased disposal costs by £746,742.'*
14. Since the introduction of Policy changes in restricting the disposal of commercial (trade) waste to Staffordshire businesses only, there has not been an operational requirement for designated commercial (trade) waste containers.
15. Appendix 2 shows the combined tonnages for the disposal of bulky / commercial (trade) waste from January to December 2023. The impact of Policy changes during the year are highlighted (a) April 2023 - price increase for commercial (trade) waste, (b) June 2023 – implementation of Staffordshire businesses only (c) August 2023 - end of 2-month amnesty and (d) September 2023 – the introduction of van and trailer permits for Staffordshire residents.
16. From January 2023 to December 2023, bulky waste tonnage at Cannock HWRC was 3,057 which is a reduction from the 2021/22 tonnage of 8,826 (paragraph 13 above), of 5,769 tonnes. This equates to a reduction in disposal costs of approximately c£718k and a reduction of c700 containers being transported on the public highway.
17. Appendix 3 show the reduction in bulky / commercial (trade) waste tonnages for January 2022 to December 2022 compared to January 2023 to December 2023.
18. By restricting the disposal of commercial (trade) waste to Staffordshire businesses only, the number of traders visiting site has reduced by 63.58%

Van & Trailer Permits

19. On 4 September 2023, an online van and trailer permit system was introduced for the use of Staffordshire residents only to dispose of their household waste when using a van and / or trailer.
20. As per the outcome of the consultation, residents are allocated with 12 visits per household per annum. Permits are not restricted to any one site.
21. As at 6 February 2024, 13,826 van and trailer permits have been issued to Staffordshire residents and 17,865 permits have been used on the HWRC Network. Appendix 4 shows site usage of permits.
22. The introduction of a van and trailer permit has been well received by site staff as it is a simple system to use and enables staff to challenge individuals who try to abuse the commercial (trade) waste scheme.

Fly Tipping Concerns

23. At the time of the changes, amnesty periods were given for commercial (trade) waste and van and trailer permits to mitigate concerns regarding increased fly tipping.
24. Since the introduction of these Policy changes, Staffordshire County Council has not been made aware of a significant increase in fly tipping across the County from District and Borough Council's.
25. Evidence from District and Borough Council's has shown no peaks in reported fly tipping incidents.

Schools, Village Halls, Charities and Community Groups

26. On 17 May 2023, Cabinet approved changes to the Schools, Village Halls, Charities and Community Groups HWRC Policy to reflect easier access to voluntary / charitable organisations and individuals to Staffordshire County Council's HWRCs.
27. Following this approval, the Council contacted existing Charities registered to use the HWRC Network to ensure that access requirements was still relevant.
28. Since the Policy change, there has been 7 additional voluntary, charity and community groups registered to the scheme to enable participants to dispose of waste arising from community and voluntary initiatives

without commercial (trade) waste charges being applied or using their household van and trailer permits.

Customer Feedback on HWRC Policy Changes

29. Following the introduction of the HWRC Policy changes the service experienced an increase in customer queries and complaints mainly because of service users challenging the need to apply for a van and / or trailer permit. These were dealt with on an individual case by case basis and subsequently the number of queries and complaints regarding Policy changes have reduced significantly.

Capital Investment Programme

30. In November 2022, Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee received a report advising of the proposed investment and improvement programme for the Staffordshire HWRC Network. To date, the following works and investment has been carried out:

JCB Replacement Programme

31. The Network is proposing to replace its aging JCB plant. Four new machines have been purchased and will be on sites from February 2024. Approval is being sought from Cabinet for the purchase of additional JCB's to replace existing aging stock. These will be purchased from within existing budgets. The existing stock will be evaluated to determine those machines which will remain within the Network to use as 'spare' machines and / or hired out to other authorities. Machines which are deemed to be 'non-essential' will be sold.

Container Programme

32. An additional 14 x 15.3 m³ containers have been purchased from within existing budgets to assist in the potential increase in demand for inert rubble waste following the removal of charges for said items.
33. An ongoing programme of container maintenance is being undertaken following the procurement of a framework agreement for welding and fabrication works.
34. An order has been placed for the 2024/25 financial year to purchase additional containers within the maximum financial value allowed within the contract.

Leek Waste Transfer Station

35. The site closed on 8 January 2024 for significant maintenance and is scheduled to be closed for 13 weeks. Works include:
- a. Electrical overhaul
 - b. New / improved lighting
 - c. Major door replacement
 - d. Bay walls replacement
 - e. Flooring repairs
 - f. Roofing repairs and welfare facilities improvements

Site Improvements

36. Improvements have been carried out on a number of sites including floor repairs at Burton and improved welfare facilities at Newcastle, Cannock and Biddulph. New fuel storage tanks and a telemetry system is being installed at all sites ready for the transfer of diesel to HVO which will be used by on-site plant, the haulage contractor (for the HWRC Network) and Staffordshire County Council's Mobile Library Service.

CCTV and Webcam

37. New CCTV has been installed on all sites which can be monitored centrally for agreed usage, i.e. insurance claims, health and safety incidents and HR related issues.
38. Proposals to introduce webcams has been delayed. However, it is envisaged that this will be 'live' during the 2024/25 financial year. Availability of webcams will provide Staffordshire residents with 'live' time visibility of each site to be able to plan their visit, i.e. is the site busy, site queuing, etc.

Site Staffing

39. The network now has a full complement of budgeted staff which has led to an improvement in communications and morale. As an example, reported sick days has reduced significantly. The HWRC operation is active in training and promoting site staff.

Defibrillators

40. Defibrillators have been installed on all Staffordshire HWRC's sites. To date, there has been no incidents on sites where these have been required to be used.

Re-use Facility at Cannock HWRC

41. A concessions tender has recently been advertised. At the time of writing this report, the outcome is not known. A verbal update will be provided to Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting.
42. Subject to a successful procurement process, a new agreement will be in place for the incoming supplier from 1 April 2024.

Link to Strategic Plan

43. 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.
44. The proposals in this report link to the principles contained in the Strategic Plan including ensuring that Climate Change is considered in all

Link to Other Overview and Scrutiny Activity

45. The Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee received an Insourcing Update and Potential Changes to the Management of Re-use Items on 16 September 2021.

Community Impact

N/A

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Commercial (trade) and bulky waste tonnages reported in November 2022

Appendix 2 - Impact of Policy changes on the tonnages of bulky / commercial (trade) waste now being disposed of across the HWRC network

Appendix 3 – Reduction in bulky / commercial (trade) waste tonnages for January 2022 to December 2022 compared to January 2023 to December 2023

Appendix 4 - Van and trailer permit usage by site

Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 10 November 2022

Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 27 April 2023

Cabinet – 17 May 2023

HWRC Equipment Replacement - Cabinet – 21 February 2024

Circular Economy and Waste Minimisation – Staffordshire Sustainability Board – 11 March 2024

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