

PORTFOLIO HOLDER DECISION

RESPONSE TO HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCILS HOUSEHOLD WASTE RECYCLING CENTRES (HWRC's) CONSULTATION

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Hampshire County Council is currently undertaking a consultation in regards to the future of the HWRC's in the county. An electronic survey is available online (www.hants.gov.uk/hwrc2016) for interested parties to respond to.
- 1.2 The HWRC's in the New Forest District (Efford, Marchwood and Somerley) are highly regarded by residents and data shows that over 500,000 visits in total are made to the three facilities each year.
- 1.3 Significant interest in this consultation has resulted in local media involvement (including radio) and also a strong representation by Members of New Forest District Council. As a result of this, a special Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel was recently held to deliberate the proposals and what this could mean for the Efford, Marchwood and Somerley HWRC's.
- 1.4 Although the online consultation allows parties to complete a 'pro forma', it is evident that this system does not take into account the New Forest's special and unique status and the associated local pressures which widely affect a valid response to this consultation.
- 1.5 Therefore, following the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel Meeting, it was determined that a written response to this consultation would be made to Hampshire County Council's Executive Member for Environment and Transport, Cllr Rob Humby.

2. PURPOSE

- 2.1 The purpose of this written letter to the Executive Member is to outline the special and unique place that is New Forest which serves the third biggest population in Hampshire and affirm the reliance of Efford, Marchwood and Somerley HWRC's by users.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

- 3.1 The alternative option would be not to respond which would not be appropriate as this would negate our responsibilities to New Forest District residents.

4. CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARED

- 4.1 None

5. RECOMMENDED

That the Environment Portfolio respond to the County Council's consultation through the letter attached as an annex to this report

6. PORTFOLIO HOLDER'S ENDORSEMENT

I agree the recommendation set out in this report.

Signed **S BEETON** Date: **16 May 2016**

Cllr Sophie Beeton
Portfolio Holder for the Environment

Date on which notice given for this Decision – 17 May 2016

Last date for call-in – 24 May 2016

Portfolio Holder - Environment: Cllr Sophie Beeton

My Ref: SB HWRC - 1

Your Ref:

Date: 24 May 2016

Cllr Rob Humby
Executive Member for Environment and Transport
Hampshire County Council
The Castle
Winchester
Hampshire
SO23 8UJ

Dear Cllr Humby,

RESPONSE TO THE HOUSEHOLD WASTE RECYCLING CENTRE (HWRC) CONSULTATION

I am writing to you in regards to the above County-wide consultation which is currently being undertaken. New Forest District Council has carefully considered the proposals and it is evident that the feeling of residents and Members of the Council is very strong in regards to these key facilities. In fact there has been significant media interest which has resulted in radio and newspaper coverage. I would therefore like to outline our response to this consultation as follows.

Firstly, to provide some context, New Forest District is geographically the largest in the County and combines a number of unique geographical features including a National Park, areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, SSSI's and Special Marine Habitats. It also serves a significant population which amounts to nearly 180,000 residents (80,000 properties) including 30% of over 65's making this the third biggest Local Authority by population in Hampshire. In addition the New Forest is one of the highest visited tourist areas in the UK attracting 13.5 million day trip visitors each year.

Residents are rightly proud of all the services which are provided by both the District and County Councils and waste management is undoubtedly highly regarded. I understand from your consultation that Hampshire County Council needs to better its financial position and part of this strategy locally could be to upgrade out-of-date facilities to best serve elderly and limited mobility residents. These 21st Century accessible-to-all sites could benefit the health of residents and such a facility would also increase visitor turnover and increase efficiencies.

The proposals in the consultation set-out a number of options which include changes of opening times, closing HWRC's on one day or more and full site closures. We have concerns in regards to these and the resulting impact that this could cause.

Efford, Somerley and Marchwood are amongst the most heavily used by both visitor numbers and the associated disposal of material (tonnage) from the provided statistical data. The impact

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of partial or full closure of one or more of these sites would be catastrophic and it would not be logical to evoke this.

Due to the special nature of the areas in the New Forest, any closure of either Efford, Somerley or Marchwood HWRC's in the District would result in local residents travelling considerable distances to an alternative site. The three HWRC's are located equidistant around the boundary of the National Park with a travelling time of around 30-35 minutes between them at best. It is clear that this travelling time will increase exponentially throughout the summer when additional demand is placed on the area through significant tourism. Furthermore, congestion on the major arterial routes throughout the District at the peak times, such as the A31, would deter residents from using the HWRC and disposing of their waste.

Air quality is also an important consideration and unnecessary vehicle movements cannot be justified. It is apparent that any closure of one or more sites would increase avoidable traffic across the Forest at a time when the wider ambition is to reduce vehicle movements. This additional traffic would conflict against current joint working initiatives to improve air quality and reduce the impact of traffic in the towns and especially along the key A35 corridor through to Southampton.

One day closures of one or more HWRC's would lead to confusion in regards to when users can attend their local facility. We envisage this would cause abortive travel movements to the site(s) and the potential temptation to fly-tip at the gates or on adjacent land at the land owners cost. Working in partnership with the Forestry Commission, New Forest National Park Authority and the Verderers we aim to reduce fly tipping and litter across the area. Residents see this as high priority and show strong support by undertaking local litter picks, attending roadshows and reporting fly-tipping incidents. New Forest District Council has responsibility for the removal of fly-tipped material and it is likely the financial cost will increase to the Authority if Efford, Somerley or Marchwood HWRC's is either closed or opening hours are reduced.

Currently visitors have to queue for prolonged periods (in excess of 30mins) at different times of the day in order to access Efford, Somerley and Marchwood HWRC's. In comparison with other HWRC sites across the County, our reduced operating hours, with outdated facilities combine to cause severe queuing of traffic at any time of the day. Consequently there is a danger that any reduction in opening hours could possibly exacerbate this problem and this is particularly pertinent at Efford HWRC with queues nearly extending off-site onto the very busy A337.

It must also be noted that the Efford HWRC is already operating for fewer hours than some other sites in the County, which open into the later evening in the summer. Efford never closes later than 4.30 p.m. (4.00 p.m. in the winter months) while other sites only open to 6.00 p.m. in the summer and 5.00 p.m. or 4.00 p.m. in the spring/autumn and winter.

New Forest District Council has been promised, over a number of years, that there would be investment to improve the operation of Efford, Somerley and Marchwood HWRC's. This is particularly an issue at Marchwood where there are steps up to the skips and this causes difficulties for the elderly and people with disabilities. To date no such investment has taken place and the site is less efficient than others in the County where material changes have been made. These changes have enabled a split level arrangement to separate the movement of the waste bins from the movements of the general public therefore reducing lost time and increasing user turnover.

It is clear that all the HWRC's in the District are working to their total operating capacity in their current outdated layout. Research needs to be undertaken to fully assess the current usage and further consultation will be required following this. If it were deemed that opening hours would

reduce, then investment would be required to increase the throughput of users during the periods when the sites were open. It is understood that the funding for improvements at Marchwood is still available and New Forest District Council suggests that this should proceed with some urgency.

For the reasons above, New Forest District Council has concluded that there should be no partial or complete closure of any of Efford, Somerley or Marchwood HWRC's within the New Forest District.

While the County Council cannot charge domestic users, there is possibly scope to allow trade waste to be disposed of through the HWRC's for a reasonable charge at certain times. In addition to raising income to support the operation of the centres, this could also negate some of the potential motivation to fly tip. Small and medium sized businesses are an important part of the local economy and the Council would support measures to assist them in this way. This would also have the added advantage of reducing vehicle movements across the District. Some of the income raised would, however, need to be invested in the sites to improve their capacity and throughput of users.

Overall, New Forest District Council would welcome the opportunity to realise savings in the operation of the HWRC's, by working together with the County Council. Some of our suggestions, whilst outside the options set out in the consultation, could help to achieve an acceptable solution.

I would therefore be delighted to meet with you to discuss this matter further and I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Cllr Sophie Beeton
Portfolio Holder - Environment