

**Report to:** Place Scrutiny Committee

**Date of meeting:** 20 November 2019

**By:** Director of Communities, Economy and Transport

**Title:** Review of service changes at Household Waste Recycling Sites

**Purpose:** To provide an update on the implementation of changes to the service

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**RECOMMENDATION:** Place Scrutiny Committee is recommended to note and comment on the report

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## 1. Background Information

1.1. In 2017 a review of the Household Waste Recycling Site (HWRS) service was carried out. A consultation on potential changes to the service followed in February 2018 and in June 2018 Cabinet resolved to make several changes to the service to meet the agreed reduction in the waste budget of £720,000.

1.2. Cabinet agreed the following changes to the service –

- Full closure of the two part-time HWRSs in Forest Row and Wadhurst
- A reduction in opening hours at the Lewes and Mountfield HWRSs
- The introduction of a charging scheme for rubble and soil, tyres, plasterboard and asbestos at all HWRSs

1.3. The service changes were advertised during August and September 2018 and were implemented at beginning of October 2018.

1.4. Full year savings from all three HWRS service changes are forecast to deliver savings of £610,300. The shortfall against the £720,000 target is mitigated by reduced household waste volumes at HWRSs which is forecast to deliver an additional £115,000 in disposal savings.

## 2. Supporting Information

### Closure of Forest Row and Wadhurst HWRSs

2.1. In 2014 Cabinet resolved that Forest Row and Wadhurst HWRSs would reduce opening days and open on Friday, Saturdays and Sundays only. Following this change the Forest Row and Wadhurst sites continued to have fewer visitors per hour during opening hours than all the other sites and were more expensive to run.

2.2. A 2017 review of the household waste recycling sites showed that if these sites closed, the displaced visitors and waste could be accommodated at nearby sites. Following the closures, over 98 per cent of East Sussex residents are still able to reach a site within a 20-minute drive of their home.

2.3. The remaining 10 Household Waste Recycling Sites continue to operate effectively and provide a good service for residents.

2.4. Since the sites were closed the Waste Team have worked with Veolia to successfully surrender the Environmental permits and site leases at Forest Row and Wadhurst. This allows East Sussex County Council (ESCC) Property Services to consider future options for both sites. Forest Row Parish Council operated a 'pop up' event at the old site for 2 weekends in October. The Parish Council would like to reopen the site to be run by and for the local community. The events were held to gauge interest and identify the kinds of facilities that a future service might offer.

### Reduced opening times at Lewes and Mountfield HWRSs

2.5. Automated traffic monitors at these sites showed us that 9am-4pm was when most people visited. There was less demand at the very start and end of the day at 8am-9am and 4pm-5pm. From 1 October 2018, the opening hours at these two sites changed to 9am-4pm every day, all year round.

## **Charging for non-household waste at East Sussex HWRSs**

2.6 The charging scheme has delivered approximately £371,000 of savings in the first ten full months of operation between November 2018 and August 2019 and is predicted to deliver up to £448,000 after twelve months.

2.7 The full year saving of £570,000 projected by the Waste Team will not be met. This is primarily because of under recovery of income for chargeable materials.

2.8 An element of under recovery of income against tonnage received at the HWRSs was always factored into the modelled savings as the £4 charge is less than the actual costs. In the first year of operation we have found that several things influence the income and tonnage received. When income received at sites is compared with actual tonnages weighed out, the scheme has so far (10 months data) under-recovered by about £78,000. This is £68,000 higher than anticipated. The primary reasons for under-recovery are:

- The charge for hardcore and soil is rounded down to £4/bag to make transactions easier and the service more affordable to all residents. The original estimated cost to ESCC of a bag of soil / hardcore is £4.37.
- Several types of material deposited in rubble containers are classified as 'household waste'. This includes things like crockery and clay flowerpots and are all deposited free of charge.
- The scheme charges by part bag, full bag and estimated load. The use of volumetric conversions is simple and quick to administer for residents and site staff, but it is not precise.

2.9 The charging scheme has had a significant impact on tonnages received at the sites –

- Chargeable waste tonnages are down by 77%
- Other waste types collected at the sites are down by 8%

This tonnage will not have disappeared. Anecdotal evidence suggests -

- Higher use of skip companies
- Reuse of soil in other parts of the garden
- The scheme will have forced traders who may have been illegally using the HWRSs to use commercial outlets
- Legitimate outlets are being used. The Waste Team and Veolia are not experiencing issues with chargeable waste appearing in significant quantities in other waste streams
- Across all East Sussex HWRS in the first 10 months of the chargeable waste stream non-household tonnage has fallen by 5,273 tonnes, a diversion rate of about 77%. In the first 12 months of the scheme the total decrease in tonnage is forecast to be about 6,400 tonnes.

Throughout all waste streams due to the various service changes it is forecast that there will be an 8.2% decrease in HWRS tonnage during 2019/20 when compared to 2018/19.

2.10 The first year of the charging scheme has been successful. However, by operating a simple system that is easy for staff and residents to use, we are aware that there are areas that can and should be improved. The net effect is that for 'full' bags of hardcore and soil, the bag price of £4 may need to be revised.

## **Charity Waste**

2.11 A report was taken to the June 26th Cabinet meeting (2018) as part of the wider Household Waste Recycling Site (HWRS) review to consider how charity waste permit holders use our Household Waste Site network. Cabinet resolved to 'ask the East Sussex County Council Waste Team to continue to engage with Charitable Organisations currently using ESCC facilities for the disposal of their waste to understand the sources of this waste better and the impact the introduction of any restrictions may have on their organisation.

2.12 Permits are important for charities by providing a means of disposing of items that they have attempted to resell / reuse but are unable to do so. Many charities lack space on the shop floor or a warehouse to store items that they are unable to resell. Without a permit scheme, many charities would be less inclined to take the risk of collecting items that are not guaranteed to sell. This will limit the throughput of material handled by furniture reuse charities. Local residents unable to take their waste to HWRSs or pay the charge for a bulky waste collection also benefit from having charities willing to collect unwanted domestic items for free.

2.13 Approximately 70% of current permit holders are charities that have links to County Council services, particularly those in Adult Social Care & Health and Children's Services. Some of these charities are directly contracted to provide services to vulnerable groups. Most permit holders are local organisations or have strong local or regional connections.

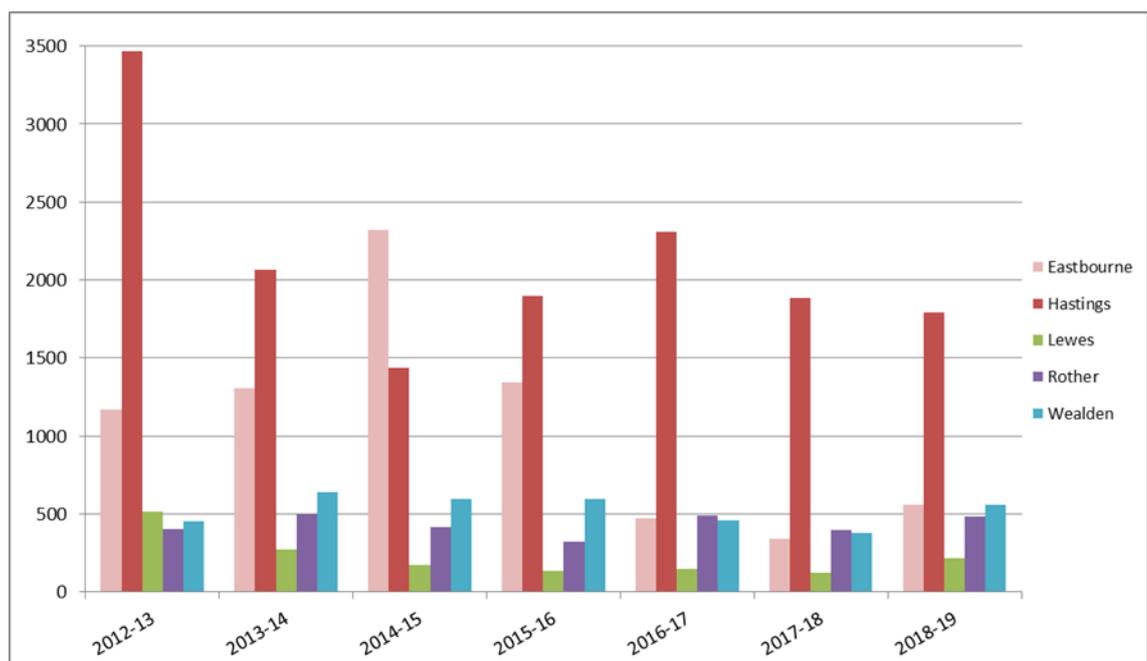
2.14 The charity permit scheme is a popular service, valued by organisations and waste officers concluded that waste brought into HWRS via charities did not constitute 'extra waste' as this waste would otherwise enter the disposal contract either via residents taking it to HWRSs themselves or via kerbside collections.

2.15 Kent, Surrey and West Sussex all maintain their own charity waste permit schemes so East Sussex is not operating in isolation. Only Hampshire County Council is a relatively nearby authority who does not accept Charity Waste.

### Flytipping

2.16 After charges were introduced, the Waste Team was asked to look at fly tipping trends across the County in order to consider if the charges may have resulted in increased incidents.

2.17 The graph below shows total incidents of fly tipping across all East Sussex Authorities between 2012-13 and 2018-19.



2.18 As can be seen from the graph above the amount of fly tipping varies from year to year. Analysis shows that in 2018/19 there was a small rise in overall fly tipping when compared to the previous year. However, this increase started in early 2018, many months before the charging scheme came into operation in October 2018. Fly tipping has also been increasing nationally.

2.19 The waste team do not believe that the changes at the HWRSs have resulted in increased fly tipping across the county and that the data available on fly tipping supports this view. The increase in flytipping is associated with non chargeable waste types. In 2018/19 'household' waste types including items like black bags, mattresses and sofas accounted for 72% of flytipping. There has been little change in the level of flytipping for the chargeable waste types like rubble and soil and tyres which account for 12% of all fly tips.

2.20 East Sussex will continue to work with District and Borough councils to monitor fly tipping data and the reasons for any increases or decreases.

## **Resident contact arising from HWRS Service changes**

2.21 The Waste Team have been monitoring and responding to enquires and complaints around the HWRS service changes. The below shows HWRS related correspondence into the Waste Team over the past 13 months. This volume of emails is significantly less than incoming emails regarding other routine aspects of our waste service.

- An average of 3 emails per week
- 12 formal complaints
- 1 x FOI
- 1 x Ombudsman complaint.

2.22 The complaint to the Ombudsman claimed that charging for non-household waste at HWRS was not legal. The Ombudsman did not uphold the complaint.

### **Impact on Brighton HWRSs and other cross-border HWRS changes.**

2.23 Both HWRSs in Brighton and Hove still offer free disposal of non-household waste. The ESCC Waste Team is monitoring waste levels on an ongoing basis with officers at Brighton and Hove City Council (BHCC) to assess whether the chargeable waste scheme has had any impact.

2.24 West Sussex County Council have already implemented reduced opening of their HWRSs and a van permit scheme. In December 2019 residency checks will also be introduced at all of their HWRS sites. This additional measure may further increase tonnages into BHCC / ESCC sites as any residents from BHCC / ESCC using West Sussex sites will no longer be able to access West Sussex sites.

2.25 Kent County Council introduced their own charging scheme on 3 June 2019 for soil and hardcore (£4/bag) and plasterboard (£6/bag or sheet). Kent already charged £2.50 per tyre.

## **3 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations**

3.1 All three HWRS Service Changes were successfully implemented with no adverse effects on the HWRS network which, 12 months on, continues to operate efficiently and effectively.

3.2 It is recognised that for some residents the changes have meant a less convenient service. However, the implementation of the changes has enabled the service to continue to provide a good network of sites and a wide range of materials for recycling and disposal. The changes also mean that East Sussex County Council continues to comply with its statutory obligations to provide sites that are reasonably accessible to residents of East Sussex and available for the free disposal of household waste.

3.3 The Waste Team will continue to monitor and improve income recovery associated with the Chargeable Waste Scheme, whilst ensuring that charges remain fair, proportional and equitable.

3.4 ESCC will continue to closely monitor levels of flytipping and take appropriate action with all relevant partner authorities and agencies where necessary.

3.5 The Place Scrutiny Committee is invited to note and comment on the report.

## **RUPERT CLUBB**

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## LOCAL MEMBERS

All

## BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None.