

Call in review of improvements to the household waste recycling centre and changes to bring bank sites decision taken on 11 June 2019

Questions for witnesses to be asked at the O&S meeting on 1 July 2019

The Chairman

The Chairman of O&S will explain the reasons why he felt the call-in was appropriate.

Members of O&S will be able to ask any questions.

Cabinet Member Clean and Green Environment – Councillor Chris Coleman

1. The public have not been specifically consulted on the 4 sites identified within the report, does the Cabinet Member consider this 'meaningful public consultation' or will he consider further consultation with current users of these sites?

Response:

I actively encourage public consultation and I do think there has been sufficient consultation on this matter. The public gave a clear steer in the public consultation undertaken in December 2019/January 2019 when we had the largest response back to a waste and recycling consultation with over 4,200 people responding and 60.7% of respondents said that they would support a reduction in the number of bring banks, as detailed in the report.

The recycling banks provided by Cheltenham Borough Council (i.e. card, paper, glass, tins and plastics) are recommended to be removed from just 4 sites however all these recyclable items, including cardboard, are already collected at kerbside for majority of the households in Cheltenham therefore residents can put these items in their kerbside recycling box. This isn't really a reduction in service, simply making it easier for residents to recycle at home, using the kerbside recycling service already provided. The third party bring banks provided on these sites will remain and these are the bring banks that collect items, with the exception of textiles, that are not collected at kerbside such as foil, carrier bags and books.

Church Piece presents a significant health and safety risk and therefore no amount of consultation with the public will change the risks that they, as users of the site, are exposed to. I absolutely accept that this is a busy site but the safety of the public is paramount. This site has third party bring banks already and these will stay because servicing of these banks takes place less frequently and by smaller vehicles. I hope that removing the bring banks will discourage 'fly tipping' on this site which has been a problem.

The bring banks are for domestic recycling however recently enforcement officers have discovered evidence of waste from businesses in the bring banks at Church Piece and this is being followed up but this has been an issue for some time at this site. Businesses are required to have their own trade waste and recycling disposal arrangements in place and are not permitted to use domestic waste and recycling services funded by local tax payers.

Asda, Hatherley is a well-used site however there is an alternative site, Morrisons, close by. The bring banks at Morrisons are in a quieter part of the car park and present less health and safety issues for the public. This site is also the busier of the two sites. This site has three third party bring banks – two types of textiles and carrier bags. I would like the space created by the removal of the glass, plastic, paper and card skips filled with a larger number of third party recycling banks to increase the amount of materials which can be collected which aren't available to residents as part of the kerbside recycling collection such as soft plastics, foil and this is being considered.

Everest Road only has two recycling banks and is therefore a less well used site situated in the middle of a residential area offering all residents a kerbside recycling service. I would like to see the space created by the removal of the two Cheltenham Borough Council skips filled with third party bring banks collecting items not available at kerbside.

The Lower High Street car park (opposite Matalan) only has one bring bank and is therefore less well used. Again, I would like to see the space created by the removal of the two Cheltenham Borough Council skips filled with third party bring banks collecting items not available at kerbside.

I am happy to ask officers to consult further and seek feedback from users of the 4 sites identified and have asked officers to include this in the wider consultation planned for the future of the HRC and other environmental services over the summer however for the health and safety issues mentioned above, the Cheltenham Borough Council bring banks at Church Piece need to be removed as soon as possible.

All members were invited to attend a tour of the Swindon Road depot on 17 June 2019 which included the household recycling centre and provided an opportunity to hear about the planned changes and ask questions. I am pleased to say that 16 members attended the tour. As a follow up to the tour, all members were invited to help shape the further consultation planned and forward questions and ideas by 1 July 2019.

I have also asked officers to be available before the council meeting on 22 July 2019 to provide an opportunity for members to ask further questions and understand more about the changes to the household recycling centre along with waste, recycling and street cleansing in general.

It is important that the order to replace the bring banks at the household recycling centre and the bring bank sites is placed urgently to mitigate the health and safety risks identified in the report. I would seek members agreement that officers can do this tomorrow in view of the 6 week lead time for delivery.

2. Which are the less well used recycling bank sites and you provide data on this?

Response:

The less well used sites tend to be the ones with fewest bring banks such as Everest Road and the Lower High Street Car Park. Historically the busiest sites have had more bring banks located on those sites to cope with demand.

The technology available at Ubico at present does not easily provide specific weight data for each bring bank site however the use of the site has been measured by Ubico who service the sites. The frequency for Ubico emptying the bring banks is based on how quickly the bring banks fill up and therefore how often they need emptying.

There is a direct correlation between usage and frequency of emptying therefore this feedback from Ubico has been used to determine the 'less well used' bring banks along with those sites which experience more 'fly tipping' which is cleared up by the Ubico street cleansing team reducing the time this team has available to keep our streets clean.

Church Piece regularly needs 'fly tipping' cleared and whilst this site requires regular emptying of the bring banks, access issues frequently prevent this.

Asda, Hatherley needs less emptying and is therefore less well used than Morrisons that requires more frequent emptying and is therefore the site in that part of town that is recommended to remain.

Everest Road and the High Street Car park sites are emptied much less frequently because they do not fill up as quickly and are therefore less well used.

3. What proactive measures will be undertaken to mitigate the risk (as highlighted in the Cabinet report) of increased fly-tipping, in addition to the retrospective actions detailed in the risk assessment, if any?

Response:

Posters were put up in locations around the town, including the bring bank sites, warning the public that fly tipping was an offence and this attracted media interest. The Council received positive feedback from local businesses effected supporting this approach.

For two weeks before the bring banks are removed from the 4 sites, officers will be on site providing help and guidance to existing users of the site to enable them to access the kerbside recycling service.

Enforcement officers are, and will continue to work closely with Ubico to immediately deal with any fly tipping issues across the town and take action where evidence exists. This will include the use of mobile CCTV where necessary and we would encourage the public to report fly tipping, particularly when they see it happening and are able to provide information about the perpetrators.

I would like to suggest that Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider establishing a working group to review the council's approach to fly tipping, within existing resources, and help shape an awareness campaign with the public.

4. Given the expected reduction in the net cost of servicing the bring bank locations (£17,000), will additional resource be made available to tackle increased fly tipping should this arise?

Response:

Members will be aware of the Council's financial position following years of central government reductions in funding to local authorities and therefore it is necessary for Council's to work more efficiently within existing resources.

A review of the council's approach to fly tipping, as suggested above, may help identify any resourcing issues and innovative ways of overcoming these.

5. The report states that carbon emissions will be reduced by the use of larger bulk containers. How much carbon is likely to be saved and has any thought been given to the increase in carbon emissions from vehicles that use the next nearest facility, once the proposed closures have taken place?

Response:

The work required to support the Council's objective to achieve a carbon neutral town by 2030 will be identified as part of the report to members planned for October this year. At present there is insufficient data available but clearly if less journeys are being made carbon emissions will reduce but we are unable, at this stage, to identify by how much.

Residents are encouraged to use the kerbside recycling service to dispose of their recycling therefore if the existing users of the bring bank sites use the kerbside service journeys to the bring bank sites should reduce thereby reducing carbon emissions. That said, I would hope that those people who visit the bring bank sites in future do so on their way somewhere so it is part of the journey anyway and not generating extra carbon emissions.

Client Manager – Environmental Services (interim) – Karen Watson

1. The report states "Officers are satisfied that meaningful public consultation regarding the recycling bring bank site service has been carried out and that changes are not significant in scale". Would the Client Manager agree with this statement; when no public consultation was undertaken on the 4 sites identified and when these 4 sites represent one third (4/12) of existing sites.

Response:

It is always difficult to determine what 'meaningful' public consultation actually means however the public consultation carried out over December 2018/January 2019 does clearly indicate public opinion supporting the reduction in the less well used bring bank sites. With limited resources available to fund consultation, a judgement is always required as to whether 'meaningful' consultation has been carried out.

Regarding Church Piece, as an officer I am required to consider the health and safety of staff and members of the public using the site and I would support further consultation and seeking feedback from existing users of the site to understand why they choose to use the bring banks rather than their kerbside recycling service. This is a piece of work that has been planned for the 2 weeks prior to removal of the bring banks on the 4 sites.

It is true to say that removing 4 out of the 12 bring banks sites reduces the number of sites by one third however this is misleading in that 2 of the sites have only 1 or 2 bring banks and are emptied less frequently than all the others. These 2 bring banks sites (High Street and Everest Road) are not really comparable with the other bring bank sites in town in terms of size or usage. The total number of bring bank sites is in fact 13, including the household recycling centre at Swindon Road.

Church Piece and Asda Hatherley are the 2 sites which are comparable with the other bring bank sites in town and it is regrettable that the health and safety issues surrounding Church Piece cannot be overcome due to the physical structure of the site and that it is used as a busy small car park.

As the cabinet member has outlined, we are looking, if possible, to get additional third party bring banks at Asda, Hatherley to increase the range of materials collected on these sites which cannot be collected at kerbside.