

## **Divisions Affected – All**

### **PLACE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**28 JUNE 2023**

### **HOUSEHOLD WASTE RECYCLING CENTRE STRATEGY**

**Report by Bill Cotton**

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

1. **The Place Overview Scrutiny and Committee is RECOMMENDED to**
  - Note the draft Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) Strategy and its approval timeline;
  - Note the feedback from the draft HWRC Strategy's public consultation;
  - Note the updates to the Strategy as a result of the consultation feedback.

#### **Executive Summary**

2. A new Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) Strategy has been developed to deliver on OCC's statutory obligations to provide a HWRC service and to meet our aims in the countywide Oxfordshire Resources and Waste Partnership (ORWP) Waste Strategy. The Strategy sets out our vision to improve the infrastructure and services offered at the Council's household waste sites, building on Oxfordshire's high recycling rates.
3. The new strategy (Annex 1) details our aims and ambitions for the HWRC network, providing an overarching direction to follow to ensure the HWRC network it is not just fit for purpose, but is an active and key component in delivering OCC climate and sustainability ambitions. The HWRC network has a critical role in enabling Oxfordshire residents to produce less waste and recycle more and is vital to embracing the circular economy through repair, upcycling and reuse over the next 20 years.
4. Residents and stakeholders were consulted on the draft strategy for 6 weeks; 27<sup>th</sup> March to 8<sup>th</sup> May 2023. Residents stated they were broadly in agreement with the strategy, however, a few changes have been made to the strategy, reflecting their feedback. The updated Strategy will now progress through the OCC Cabinet approvals process.

## Background

5. Oxfordshire County Council is the Waste Disposal Authority and, together with the district and city councils, we have one of the highest recycling rates in England along with very low waste arisings per head. We work together under the Oxfordshire Resources and Waste Partnership and our countywide waste strategy to deliver against our challenging targets on waste recycling, reduction and reducing waste to landfill. Our network of HWRCs and the HWRC strategy are key components in our obligations to the partnership and the joint strategy.
6. Under Section 51 of the Environmental Protection Act, Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) has a legal duty to provide HWRCs for Oxfordshire residents.
7. OCC currently operates 7 HWRC sites. The sites receive around one million visits each year and accept approximately 45,000 tonnes of waste which is around 15% of the total household waste generated in the county with a recycling rate of around 65.5%. The facilities are highly regarded in the county and receive high satisfaction ratings when residents are asked about HWRC layout, cleanliness and staff helpfulness.
8. The previous (2015) HWRC Strategy proposed reducing the number of HWRC's from seven to three or four, closing all existing sites and opening new ones. The strategy was unpopular and has proved undeliverable, with land in the right place and at the right price difficult to find and secure.
9. The new Strategy is proposing securing and expanding (or relocating where this is not possible) existing HWRC sites to manage the expected population increases, legislative requirements and support climate ambitions. It lays the foundation that enables the following:
  - (a) Securing S106 and CIL contributions,
  - (b) Make maintenance, planning, lease and investment decisions with a longer term perspective,
  - (c) Plan how we will deal with population growth/lack of HWRC capacity,
  - (d) Develop the HWRC service to meet future legislative requirements,
  - (e) Help to meet OCC's carbon objectives and enable the transition to a circular economy,
  - (f) Increase Oxfordshire's recycling rates.

## Strategy Development

10. A public engagement exercise was completed in summer 2021 to determine what residents wanted from their HWRC service. The feedback from 1911 respondents was very strong that residents did not want sites to shut and valued a local, easy to use service that can accept a wide range of waste materials.

11. In May 2022 OCC Property Services commissioned dilapidation and condition surveys of all 7 HWRC sites. These surveys have informed the options appraisal for the HWRC network's longer-term planning, and the HWRC strategy has been developed to support this longer term planning to ensure Oxfordshire's residents have a safe and secure HWRC network.
12. The new strategy has been developed to be cross cutting, looking primarily at HWRC site infrastructure but also delivery through an actively maintained action plan. It is resident focused, looking to provide the local, easy to use facilities that residents have told us that they want. Expanded and improved sites will encourage residents to embrace the circular economy and to maximise reuse and repair, drive recycling rates up, and helping to support OCCs carbon aspirations.
13. The Strategy has four primary aims, and then details a range of ways in which they may be delivered. The aims are:
  - (a) Provide a good quality service for Oxfordshire residents, our waste collection authorities, and other key stakeholders and deliver on our commitments in our joint waste strategy.
  - (b) Develop and promote in-county reuse and repair of household materials taken to HWRCs
  - (c) Reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill and energy recovery
  - (d) Reduce carbon emissions by seeking to manage waste as close to source as possible
14. The Strategy has also been developed to allow sites to be reviewed on a priority basis. The possible relocation of HWRC sites (due to lease or planning expiry) can be politically sensitive due to residents wanting close access to a HWRC site. The new Strategy sets the principals for future decision making. Individual site expansion or relocation will be subject to planning permission consultations giving residents the ability to comment on specifics.

## **Consultation Feedback and Strategy Updates**

15. The Strategy's public consultation ran for 6 weeks from 27<sup>th</sup> March to 8<sup>th</sup> May 2023 on OCC's 'Lets Talk' consultation platform. Hard copies were also available in libraries. The consultation was advertised at HWRCs, in libraries, through the 'Your Oxfordshire' newsletter and on social media (paid for and organic posts), including the 'next door' application.
16. The full results from the consultation and its questions are provided in Annex B. There were 391 responses submitted through the 'Let Talk' portal and a further 4 responses provided by partners and stakeholders via email. There was a good geographic spread of respondents from across Oxfordshire. Most respondents were users of our HWRC network currently, with only 5% of respondents not currently HWRC site users.
17. The vast majority of respondents, including those from stakeholders and partners, were strongly in agreement with the strategy's goals and aims, and

there was also strong agreement with our proposals on how we will deliver against our aims. This indicates wide support for the Strategy's approach to deliver a HWRC network set up for reuse, upcycling, innovation, and the circular economy.

18. Free text comments showed that respondents are keen for OCC to keep travel distances to HWRCs as low as possible to encourage people to use the sites and there were several requests that OCC does not shut sites. There were also several comments linking the need to use a car to reach HWRCs with the increasing move to reduce personal car ownership. There were also several requests to ensure we coordinate services with the District and City councils to ensure a comprehensive, easy to access waste service.
19. Respondents also used the free text boxes to demonstrate their support for increasing the amount of reuse happening at HWRCs to reduce the amount of material disposed of and generate income. There were also several comments related to the need to work with manufacturers to reduce the amount of packaging produced to help residents waste less and recycle more.
20. This consultation feedback has been incorporated into the strategy update, and the strategy remains committed to the introduction of reuse on sites as soon as we have the space to safely do so. The strategy acknowledges the councils active travel policies and will ensure that our access policy continues to enable residents to visit sites easily using a variety of different transport modes. OCC remains committed to our partnership with the other councils in Oxfordshire and will continue to work with them through the Oxfordshire Resources and Waste Partnership to deliver effective and where possible integrated waste services within the county.
21. The strategy also acknowledges the concerns and consultation feedback received around travel distances to sites. Due to future uncertainties, OCC cannot commit to not shutting any sites, as stated within the strategy as OCC does not have security of tenure at some locations, however the strategy has indicated OCC's preference (dependent upon council finance) to secure or, where needed, relocate the sites in our network. Once OCC has done this, then OCC will look at expansion of existing sites to accommodate the increasing population. This may mean new sites are added to the network.
22. This strategy focuses on HWRC infrastructure, and therefore changes have not been made to address the consultation comments about DIY charging, however this have been noted and will be considered as part of the next scheduled review of our waste acceptance policy.
23. The HWRC Strategy does not address our role in lobbying Government and manufacturers as this is included in our countywide Strategy<sup>1</sup>.
24. As well as ORWP's countywide waste strategy, the HWRC strategy aligns with a number of OCC's other strategies: the active travel policy, and OCC's net zero

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<sup>1</sup> [OxfordshiresResourcesandWasteStrategy](#)

ambitions (through the drive to reduce carbon emissions) and links with OCC's developer funding policy.

## **Strategy Approval**

25. The strategy has been updated following the public consultation, and this updated version will be submitted via the Forward Planning process for Cabinet approval. The proposed approval timeline is as follows:

- SLT 6<sup>th</sup> Sept 2023
- Informal Cabinet 19<sup>th</sup> Sept 2023
- Cabinet 17<sup>th</sup> Oct 2023

## **Corporate Policies and Priorities**

26. The HWRC strategy aligns with several goals in OCCs Strategic plan 2023-2025:

- (a) Put action to address the climate emergency at the heart of our work – by looking to increase reuse and recycling at HWRCs and reduce disposal we are assisting in the transition to a circular economy, and helping to reduce carbon emissions
- (b) Prioritise the health and wellbeing of residents – the provision of safe, legal and environmentally sustainable ways of disposing of materials no longer wanted
- (c) Working with local businesses and partners for environmental, economic and social benefit – we contract with several local businesses to help manage waste accepted at HWRCs, and our network is used by a number of charities as a way to dispose of materials.

## **Financial Implications**

27. Consultation publicity and advertising costs were met from existing waste budgets, and Consultation responses have been incorporated into the strategy by existing staff, therefore there are no further financial impacts for strategy development.

28. The Strategy will support the delivery of sustainable and cost effective HWRC service across Oxfordshire and aids the transition to a circular economy through re-use and repair of household materials. Enabling and promoting reuse and repair through reuse shops can generate an income revenue stream helping offset overall service costs.

29. Business cases for Capital Funding to support strategy delivery will be taken on a site-by-site basis in priority order through the relevant Capital boards and approval processes if required.
30. The strategy will also support developer funding requests, reducing the capital burden on the council.

Comments checked by: Filipp Skiffins, Assistant Finance Business Partner, [filipp.skiffins@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:filipp.skiffins@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

## **Legal Implications**

31. Paper has been reviewed and no issues raised

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## **Staff Implications**

32. Once approved, delivery of the strategy will be carried out by staff within the Waste Management Group, assisted by Property and Environment and Place Directorate colleagues as required.

## **Equality & Inclusion Implications**

33. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out to identify any impacts on residents with protected characteristics and any additional community impacts. This found that the HWRC strategy is most likely to impact travel distances for residents, meaning sites are either nearer, or closer than they are currently. This may impact carbon emissions (and associated climate impacts) and travel costs.

## **Sustainability Implications**

34. The Strategy has a positive impact on climate action as it supports the waste hierarchy, ensuring the recycling and reuse of household waste. A Climate Impact Assessment is currently being developed. As most residents arrive at HWRCs by car (as materials are often too big or numerous to be carried/transported by bike) conveniently located HWRCs close to centres of population help to reduce the car mileage travelled by residents to visit HWRCs. We also promote journeys to be combined with other activities where possible.

## **Risk Management**

35. Public acceptability of the strategy is likely to be high as the vast majority of respondents, including those from stakeholders and partners, were strongly in

agreement with the strategy's goals and aims. Feedback has been incorporated into this strategy, (or is included within other OCC documents) reducing the risk of public dissatisfaction further.

36. The new HWRC Strategy is the mitigating factor for the following risks and will support the long-term planning for the HWRC network to ensure that it is properly invested in, providing Oxfordshire with a viable, sustainable and safe HWRC network.
- (a) If the HWRC network fails, with sites having to be closed due to leases or planning permission expiring or due to safety issues, this will leave residents without a local HWRC to deposit materials, causing reputational and political issues, and may lead to increased revenue costs as residents place more materials in their kerbside residual bins.
  - (b) As population in the county increases the sites will become increasingly over capacity, causing queuing, issues on the highways network and potentially leading to more waste being deposited in kerbside waste streams and increasing costs.
  - (c) There are a number of legislative changes planned over the next few years that are likely to require additional space on site to accommodate materials. The strategy will help us to address compliance.
37. A risk register for the service is currently maintained, and as each individual business case is brought forward for individual sites, a risk register will be developed for each project.

Bill Cotton  
Corporate Director for Environment and Place

## Annex A:

### HWRC Strategy



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## Annex B:

### HWRC Strategy consultation results



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n%20questions%20FIN

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