

## **Divisions Affected – All**

### **CABINET**

**19 SEPTEMBER 2023**

## **HOUSEHOLD WASTE RECYCLING CENTRE STRATEGY 2023-2043**

**Report by Bill Cotton**

**Corporate Director for Environment and Place**

### **RECOMMENDATION**

1. **The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to**
  - Approve the Household Waste Recycling Centre Strategy 2023-2043

### **Executive Summary**

2. The Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) Strategy has been developed to deliver on our obligations under the overarching Oxfordshire Resources and Waste Partnership (ORWP) Waste Strategy and to set out our vision to improve the way the Council manages the infrastructure and services offered at the Council's household waste sites, building on our high recycling rates and embracing the circular economy through repair, upcycling and reuse over the next 20 years.
3. The new strategy details our aims and deliverables for the HWRC network, providing an overarching direction to follow so that subsequent HWRC capital funding decisions can be aligned with it whilst being mindful of Local Government budgetary constraints. It will ensure the HWRC network it is not just fit for purpose but is a key component in delivering the Council's climate and sustainability ambitions, encouraging Oxfordshire residents produce less waste and recycle more.

### **Background**

4. 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.

5. Under Section 51 of the Environmental Protection Act, Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) has a legal duty to provide HWRCs for Oxfordshire residents.
6. The Council 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 availability, staff helpfulness and cleanliness.
7. 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.
8. The new Strategy aims to maintain a network of 7 HWRCs, by 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 whilst being mindful of local government budgetary constraints. 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 the Council's carbon objectives and enable the transition to a circular economy,
  - (f) Increase Oxfordshire's reuse and recycling rates.

## **Strategy Development**

9. 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.
10. In May 2022 the Council's 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 to ensure Oxfordshire's residents have a safe and secure HWRC network.
11. 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 the Council's carbon aspirations.

12. 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
  
13. 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.

## **Strategy Implementation**

14. Infrastructure is a core part of the strategy and implementation will take various factors into account including land ownership, lease length, planning permission and population growth, as well as available budget. Broadly the order of works will be:
  - (a) Continue with essential maintenance works at all sites
  - (b) Secure lease and planning permission extensions at relevant sites
    - (1) If not possible, begin site replacement process
  - (c) Investigate possibility of improvement and capacity expansion at sites to increase the amount reused, repaired, and recycled – beginning with the sites under most capacity pressure
  - (d) Consider the location of any additional sites(s)
  - (e) Seek to ensure alignment with other core Council strategies and objectives and those of our partners through our joint waste strategy
  
15. The strategy and implementation and action plan will drive any future procurement of the management service and improvements in service delivery.
  
16. Strategic Capital Board have been briefed on the strategy throughout its development. If the strategy is approved, officers can begin work on developing

individual business cases to secure, maintain and expand sites. These will be taken through the Council's capital governance process for discussion and approval.

## **Corporate Policies and Priorities**

17. The HWRC strategy aligns with several goals in the Council's 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.
18. The HWRC strategy is part of an overarching countywide Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy (JMWMS) that aims to keep waste growth to 0%/head, increase reuse and recycling rates, and reduce what is sent to landfill. The HWRC strategy is a key component in delivering our targets under that strategy.
19. The Local Transport and Connectivity Plan aims for an inclusive and net zero Oxfordshire Transport system. While HWRC users are likely to still use a car to access site (as goods are often too heavy or numerous to transport in other ways), the strategy acknowledges the council's 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. The strategy commits to maintaining a network of sites, which means that residents can still access a local site without needing to make longer journeys, and as part of our overall JMWMS, efforts to reduce the overall amount of household waste being generated will help to reduce the number of trips needing to be made to HWRCs.

## **Financial Implications**

20. The strategy sets out capital requirements to both maintain and expand the provision of sites. The Capital funding to support delivery of the strategy will be requested through the Council's annual capital budget and business planning process. Whilst the total funding requirement to deliver the strategy will be recognised and added to the unfunded pipeline, consideration of the high-priority and time-critical schemes will be considered against other priorities for the funded pipeline as part of the 2024/25 process. Subject to agreement to be

added to the funded pipeline, business cases for priority projects will then be brought forward for inclusion into the Capital Programme on a site by site basis in priority order through the relevant Capital boards and governance processes.

21. Notwithstanding the capital requirements for maintaining and developing the sites there are a number of revenue pressures currently faced by the authority which will have implications for the delivery of the HWRC Strategy. Existing budgets will need to explore alternative options in evaluating the affordability of the current network and this will be kept under review.

Comments checked by: Ian Dyson, Assistant Director of Finance

## **Legal Implications**

22. Pursuant to section 30 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 (the Act) the council, being a county council, is a waste disposal authority for the purposes of Part II of the Act. Under section 51 of the Act (which falls under Part II) waste disposal authorities have a statutory duty to provide residents with a place to deposit their household waste and to dispose of the waste so deposited. They are usually Household Waste Recycling Centres.

Comments checked by: Jayne Pringle, Principal Solicitor Contracts & Conveyancing

## **Staff Implications**

23. 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**

24. 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 further than they are currently. This may impact carbon emissions (and associated climate impacts) and travel costs.

## **Sustainability Implications**

25. The Strategy has a positive impact on climate action as it supports the waste hierarchy, enabling the recycling and reuse of household waste. A Climate

Impact Assessment has been developed. As most residents arrive at HWRCs by car (as materials are often too big or numerous to be carried/transported by bike, foot or public transport) 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**

26. 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.
  
27. There are a number of risks associated with delivering the strategy. The high level ones are detailed here, and a risk register for the service is maintained. As each individual business case is brought forward for individual sites, a risk register will be developed for each project.
  - (a) Availability of capital funding
  - (b) Availability and affordability of land
  - (c) Planning permission for new sites
  - (d) Escalating costs of construction
  - (e) Capacity of staff to deliver
  - (f) Availability of revenue funding to operate the HWRC network

## **Consultations**

28. The Strategy's public consultation ran for 6 weeks from 27<sup>th</sup> March to 8<sup>th</sup> May 2023 on the Council'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.
  
29. 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.

30. 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.
31. Detailed information about how the Council incorporated the feedback given was presented to Environment and Place Scrutiny committee on 28/6/23, the report is attached in Annex C

Bill Cotton  
Corporate Director for Environment and Place

Annex:

#### Annex A – HWRC Strategy



HWRC strategy  
FINAL.pdf

#### Annex B – Consultation results



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#### Annex C – Environment and Place Scrutiny paper



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Background papers: Nil

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