
Report of the Director of Environment & Neighbourhoods

Scrutiny Board (Environment & Neighbourhoods)

Date: 11th April 2011

Subject: Review of Household Waste Sorting Sites (HWSS)

Electoral Wards Affected: All

Specific Implications for

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In September 2010, Scrutiny Board undertook an inquiry to assess progress with the implementation of Leeds' Integrated Waste Strategy (2005-2035). The inquiry made recommendations to improve the long term recycling infrastructure for Leeds, and so reduce the impact of waste management on the environment by significantly reducing the amount of waste going to landfill.

The Household Waste Sorting Site infrastructure provides a significant contribution (10.8% points) to the overall recycling rate of the city (31.25% in 2009/10). The authority has sites spread across the district providing a broad spatial infrastructure and the accessibility for Leeds residents to recycle. However, the inquiry noted that in general the HWSS are not working to capacity or consistently maximising recycling performance and diversion of waste from landfill.

In accordance with Recommendation 5 (Scrutiny Board, September 2010), this report provides an update on a review into operational practices of HWSS that seeks service improvements based around the following key principles:

- Extended site opening hours to the public;
- Improved site supervision and site management arrangements;
- Enhanced customer service

This report requests Scrutiny Board consideration and comment regarding amended opening hours across all HWSS sites, that will make the sites more accessible to the residents of Leeds, whilst noting the changes required to operational staffing arrangements, acknowledging that to maximise the recycling potential of each site requires changes in operational and management practices as well as cultural change.

The proposed revised opening hours at each HWSS being:

Proposed Opening Hours	Months
08:00 – 18:00	April to October
08:00 – 16:00	November to March

1.0 Purpose of this Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the findings of the on-going review into operational practices of HWSS, in accordance with Recommendation 5 (Scrutiny Board, September 2010):

“That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods ensures that the findings arising from the future planned review into the operational practices of Household Waste Sorting Sites and Bring Sites be reported back to Scrutiny for consideration.”

1.2 The report requests Scrutiny Board’s consideration and comment to implement amended opening hours across all HWSS sites, whilst noting the changes required to operational staffing arrangements.

2.0 Background Information

2.1 In October 2006, Executive Board adopted the Integrated Waste Strategy for Leeds (2005-2035). As well as setting a wide range of local objectives, the Integrated Waste Strategy addresses EU Landfill Directive targets and has a Vision of *“a zero waste city, whereby we reduce, re-use, recycle and recover value from all waste, and no waste is sent to landfill.”*

2.2 In September 2007, Executive Board approved updates reflecting the Council’s commitment to achieving a combined recycling and composting rate in excess of 50% of household waste by 2020. The published 3 year waste action plan (2009 – 2012) documents the actions the Council is undertaking in order to meet the vision and aspirations of the Integrated Waste Strategy.

2.3 The HWSS infrastructure provides a significant contribution (10.8% points) to the overall recycling rate of the city (31.25% in 2009/10). The authority has sites spread across the district providing a broad spatial infrastructure and the accessibility for Leeds residents to recycle. HWSS currently achieve between

50 to 70% recycling of waste delivered to site. The aspiration remains to maximize the potential of all the sites and achieve a consistent recycling rate of 70%. It is acknowledged that this would require changes in operational and management practices as well as cultural change.

2.4 Since September 2010, working with site staff and Trade Unions, progress has been made to explore service improvements based around a number of key principles:

- Extended site opening hours to the public;
- Improved site supervision and site management arrangements;
- Enhanced customer service

2.5 To help achieve these proposed service improvements, discussions have been ongoing regarding the introduction of revised staffing structures, potential job role revisions and the issue of shift pattern changes.

2.6 The following section summarises the main proposals to emerge from this review including key benefits and other issues that have been identified.

3.0 Main Proposals, Benefits and Issues

3.1 Revised opening hours

Current HWSS opening hours in Leeds are shown in the Table below.

Current Opening Hours*	Months
09:00 – 17:00	April to October
09:00 – 16:00	November to March

* The two exceptions to this are:

- 1) Kirkstall Road HWSS which currently has site opening times of between 08:00 – 17:00 (Monday to Saturday) and 09:00 – 16:00 (Sunday).
- 2) East Leeds (Seacroft) which is currently closed for refurbishment. It is anticipated that this site will reopen in September 2011

3.2 As can be seen the current opening times are restricted to typical office based hours and do not provide the ability for residents to deposit waste and recycling on their way to work; nor in the early evening during the longer summer days. The experiences of staff and supervisors on site confirm that earlier opening would meet a demand for residents to visit before work. It is also the sites experience that later opening although allowing customers to visit after work needs to be limited, as there has not been the demand for vastly extended hours. There has been no quantitative survey work undertaken to date.

3.3 To help inform the extent to which existing opening hours could be revised to help support the dual aims of enhanced recycling levels and improved public access, the HWSS review collected comparative data on 15 local

authorities and some 40 individual sites. An analysis of the data was undertaken to identify broad opening hours for weekdays and weekends in both summer and winter. The opening hours were categorised as shortest, typical and longest.

3.4 The conclusion drawn from the analysis indicated that in general opening times in Leeds are currently at the lower end when compared to those authorities reviewed and by implication not working to full capacity or consistently maximising recycling performance.

3.5 In this regard, it has been identified that the potential exists for extending opening hours in order to support service improvement aims (Table 1: HWSS Opening Hours Comparison).

3.6 Any preferred option needing to be viable from a financial, staffing and licensing/ approvals perspective, as discussed later in the report.

3.7 It is proposed to revise opening hours at each HWSS as follows:

Proposed Opening Hours*	Months
08:00 – 18:00	April to October
08:00 – 16:00	November to March

* Amended times are shown in bold

3.8 As illustrated, the proposed opening hours are designed to be the same at each HWSS across the district. It is considered that consistent opening hours are a significant factor both in terms of helping to improve public awareness and accessibility but importantly in order to help facilitate the implementation of the proposed 4 over 3 shift pattern and staffing.

3.9 It should be noted that outside of the revised opening hours, it is proposed that HWSS staff will be present on site from 07:45 until 18:15 (spring/ summer) or 16:15 (autumn/ winter) to ensure that sites are made ready for public opening and closing at the beginning and end of each day.

Structure operating model

To implement the proposed changes to opening hours, discussions with staff and trade unions have been ongoing regarding a 4 over 3 shift pattern, revised job roles, staffing and supervisory arrangements

The following roles have been identified as being central to the operational effectiveness of each HWSS and service performance improvements.

Site Supervisors: Site Supervisors, working flexibly across each of the nine HWSS, will continue to provide dedicated site management cover at COTEC standard (as required by the Environment Agency in line with site operating licence requirements).

Senior Operatives: Key responsibilities of the Senior Operative role will cover the timely opening and closing of sites and the operation of specialist heavy plant and machinery. The role will also assist Site Supervisors to ensure the safe and efficient operation of sites, and improve a proactive approach to customer care.

Operatives: The Operative role is also responsible for encouraging the public to maximise the separation of items brought to site, providing advice and for enhancing on-site customer assistance, in order to drive the management of wastes up the waste hierarchy and so assist the Authority in meeting the objectives and targets of the Municipal Waste Strategy.

Planning implications

Discussions have been on-going with the local planning authority regarding the introduction of the proposed extension of HWSS opening hours and the potential likelihood for any associated planning consents that may be required. Table 2 summarises the current position regarding any planning restrictions on opening hours.

3.10 In conclusion, and as a result of the discussions with planning, the review has confirmed that out of the 9 HWSS, only 3 will now require a new planning application to extend opening hours in line with the revised times. The sites which will require applications are:

- East Leeds (Seacroft),
- Holmwell Road (Middleton) and
- Meanwood Road.

3.11 The remaining 6 sites at Ellar Ghyll (Otley), Kirkstall Road, Grangefield Road (Pudsey), Stanley Road (Harehills), Thorpe Arch and Milner's Road (Yeadon) will not require new consents. This is because the planning conditions attached with their existing planning permissions already accommodate the periods in which the revised opening hours will be effective.

3.12 Whilst the majority of sites will not therefore require a change to their existing planning consents, it is recognised that a small number of sites do have particular residential sensitivities. This is especially so with regard to the Milner's Road site at Yeadon. To help alleviate these problems, work to install a noise barrier will shortly begin on site and is expected to be completed in June prior to the proposed start of the revised opening hours. In addition to this, as part of the on going review, managers are also exploring ways in which on site operational arrangements could also be modified to help further alleviate any potential noise or disturbance that may be caused during operating hours. For example, during the potentially more sensitive times of 8:00 - 10:00 hours and 16:00 - 18:00 during weekends in the spring and summer months.

3.13 An extension of summer opening hours beyond 18:00 would exceed the existing planning permissions at Grangefield Road (Pudsey), Stanley Road (Harehills), Thorpe Arch and Milner's Road (Yeadon)

3.14 The local planning authority has advised that the determination period for the submission and consideration of planning applications for extending opening hours is 13 weeks. It is anticipated that planning applications will be submitted following this report to Scrutiny that will allow us to assess the opening hours, across all sites, for a period of up to one year and so quantify the improvement in accessibility and recycling rates

Enforcement

3.15 A percentage of the waste being disposed of at Household Waste Sorting Sites (HWSS), is suspected to be of trade origin. Research has shown that illegal disposal of trade waste at HWSS has a negative impact on recycling performance, and is of significant cost to LCC.

3.16 It is clearly apparent from the evidence / findings of site supervisors, site staff and their managers as well as enforcement officers, that significant amounts of commercial waste are still being illegally deposited in Leeds City Council Household Waste Sites (HWSS). Such deposits place a financial burden on the Authority by inadvertently having to dispose of this type of waste. It is believed that the majority of commercial waste producers using these sites do so knowingly to avoid paying for their commercial waste disposal and landfill tax. This in effect then places unnecessary costs onto the Authority and the tax payers of Leeds.

3.17 An Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) system has previously been installed at two Household Waste Sorting Sites, Pudsey Grangefield & Holmewell Road. However this system and the information arising is not currently fully utilised.

3.18 It is therefore proposed to resurrect this system and run a trial in order to :

- quantify current trade waste disposal at the these two HWSS,
- assist site staff and Enforcement Officers to identifying traders using the site unlawfully,
- allow enforcement officers to take such matters up with individuals and ensure by use of fair an appropriate enforcement powers that they are indeed complying with waste legislation and their duty of care,
- understand the full benefits of ANPR if adopted across all sites

3.19 By doing so there should be an improvement in recycling rates, a reduction in tonnage & disposal costs and the associated development of preventative measures/ acceptance procedures for suspected trade waste at HWSS.

Timescales for Implementation

The planned operational implementation of the proposed revised opening hours and new staffing structure is anticipated to be on 1st August 2011. However this is dependent on the determination of three planning applications.

4.0 Implications for Council Policy and Governance

4.1 These proposals are in line with the earlier report to Executive Board in June 2010, and the earlier Scrutiny enquiry of September 2010.

4.2 Planning consultations will be undertaken on three sites: East Leeds, (Seacroft), Holmwell Road (Middleton) and Meanwood Road.

4.3 Existing planning permissions already accommodate the periods in which the revised opening hours will be effective for Ellar Ghyll (Otley), Kirkstall Road, Grangefield Road (Pudsey), Stanley Road (Harehills), Thorpe Arch and Milner's Road (Yeadon)..

5.0 Financial and Resource Implications

Summary of Financial and Resource Issues

5.1 The revised opening hours, and associated revised staffing structure are to be implemented within existing waste collection and disposal budgets

6.0 Conclusions

6.1 In conclusion, this report provides an update about the on-going review into the operation practices of HWSS as requested by Scrutiny Board in September. The report summarises the progress made since September to develop proposals to improve public accessibility to sites and staff contribution to maximising consistently high recycling performance and diversion from landfill.

7.0 Recommendations

7.1 Scrutiny Board is requested to:

- Comment on the proposed revised opening hours at all HWSS
:
08:00 – 18:00 (April to October)
08:00 – 16:00 (November to March)

To be kept under review for a period of up to one year and so permit a quantitative assessment of improved accessibility and recycling rates

- Note the changes required to operational staffing arrangements in order to implement amended opening hours across all sites.
- Support the proposed ANPR trial

8.0 Background Papers

The following papers are available to view:

Report of the Director of Environment & Neighbourhoods, Executive Board 22nd June 2010, Strategic Review of Household Waste Sorting Sites and Bring Sites

Environment & Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board, September 2010, Inquiry Report into Recycling

9.0 APPENDICES

Table 1: HWSS Opening Hours (source: Jacobs, 25th February 2010)

Table 2: HWSS Planning Restrictions (source: Recycling & Waste team, March 2011)