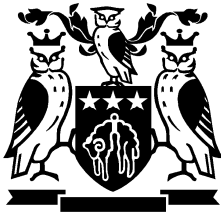


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Supplementary information for 11th May Development Plan Panel

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Report to: Development Plans Panel

Date: 10th May 2010

Subject: Summary of Local Community Engagement on Residual Waste Treatment Project
(December 2009 - March 2010)

1 Aim/Context

- 1.1 The aim of this paper is to provide Development Plans Panel with a summary of the feedback from local community engagement in early 2010 on the Council's Residual Waste Treatment Project. It should be noted that this engagement activity does not constitute consultation on the Natural Resources and Waste Development Plan Document (NRWDPD), and relates to a specific proposal for a waste treatment facility. However, given that the NRWDPD will provide the context for a decision on a future planning application for such a facility in Leeds, it was considered appropriate to provide details of this information alongside the results of the NRWDPD consultation.

2 Background

- 2.1 As part of the Council's current PFI procurement for a Residual Waste Treatment (RWT) facility it has been recognised throughout the project that community involvement and discussion is an integral element of the scheme. Public communication and education has taken place through various means, which culminated in February and March 2010 with a series of briefing sessions for the residents living in the areas surrounding the potential locations for the facility proposed by the remaining two bidders in the procurement process.
- 2.2 Prior to this, in December 2009, a household information pack was produced and distributed to 12,075 households within the area surrounding the proposed locations. It included information leaflets, describing the shortlisted bidders' proposals and providing responses to a range of 'frequently asked questions'.
- 2.3 This information also included a freepost postcard inviting residents to register to receive further information and to be invited to attend community briefing sessions. At the same time posters were distributed, along with registration postcards, in key community locations to further publicise the opportunity to register for further information or a briefing session. The locations used were follows:

- Richmond Hill Housing Office
- Richmond Hill Children's Centre
- Richmond Hill Library
- St Phillip's Church Hall
- Halton Moor One Stop Centre
- East Leeds Leisure Centre
- Corpus Christi Church
- Osmondthorpe One Stop Centre
- East Leeds Health Centre, 78 Osmondthorpe Lane
- Hunslet Health Centre
- Hunslet Jobshop
- Hunslet Morrisons
- Hunslet Green Community Sports Centre

- 2.4 This enabled a database of residents to be compiled, and these residents were subsequently invited to attend the public meetings. This approach was also intended to ensure that venues were adequately sized, and to ensure that the number of attendees at each individual session allowed effective discussion to take place and enabled everyone attending to voice their concerns.
- 2.5 A further 180 households were also visited in Osmondthorpe to further encourage residents to register. 38 householders were spoken to as part of this process. Further to this, a full page article was included in 'Recycling and Waste News', which was distributed to every household in Leeds as part of the Council's regular Christmas recycling information, asking residents citywide to register to receive further information.
- 2.6 168 residents registered to receive further information, with 128 of these registering to attend a briefing event.
- 2.7 Ten briefing sessions and three Forum events took place on the following dates, at the following venues:
- East Leeds Leisure Centre, Halton Moor – 26th January 2010
 - Civic Hall – 27th January 2010
 - Hill Community Centre – 29th January 2010
 - Hunslet St Mary's Primary School – 1st February 2010
 - St Phillip's Church Hall, Osmondthorpe – 2nd February 2010
 - Richmond Hill Community Centre – 5th February 2010
 - St Phillip's Church Hall, Osmondthorpe – 16th February 2010
 - Corpus Christi Church Hall, Halton Moor – 17th February 2010
 - Halton Moor Forum – 23rd February 2010
 - Halton Forum – 25th February 2010
 - Richmond Hill Forum – 1st March 2010
- 2.8 The total recorded attendance at the briefing sessions was 68 people. However, we were not able to record all attendees at the session on 2nd February and estimate that a further 15-20 people attended this session. We estimate that around 70-80 people attended the session on 1st March alone and that around 40-50 people attended the Halton Moor Forum and Halton Forum. Council officers encouraged attendees at all the events to distribute further registration cards, to increase the number of residents who are registered to receive further information. Generally, positive feedback about the approach has been received (i.e. to arrange many smaller forums, rather than running a few large events), as these allow residents to have their specific questions heard and answered in a less intimidating environment.
- 2.9 All of the residents who have registered were also sent:
- The minutes of the briefing session (if they attended);
 - A briefing note about the final two short-listed bids;
 - A briefing note about the decision not to develop a dedicated Waste Transfer Station in Kirkstall for residual waste;
 - A briefing note summarising the evidence relating to health impacts of waste incineration technologies.
- 2.10 The briefing sessions were held to provide a forum in which Council officers could present an update on the current status of the project and inform residents of future developments. This involved a short pre-recorded video presentation being played, following which the majority of time was allocated for an open discussion.
- 2.11 This report, whilst not providing an exhaustive list of all issues raised, provides a summary of the key issues commonly raised across all briefing sessions in order to highlight the areas

where follow up action should be taken. Full minutes were taken for each of the meetings, and have been circulated to all attendees.

3 Key Issues

3.1 Throughout the meetings it was clear that most residents understood why the facility is required by the Council to manage residual waste, and the need to move away from landfill. At the same time residents are apprehensive about the facility due to the perceived impacts associated with waste treatment plants.

3.2 Across all of the meetings the nature of the questions asked and the issues discussed were broadly of a similar nature. In general the discussions focussed around five main areas of concern, which were:

- Health impacts/emissions;
- Site selection;
- Transport and traffic;
- Communication/consultation;
- Other Council projects (thought to be related to the waste treatment project).

3.3 A summary of each of the key themes discussed during the briefing sessions is provided below.

4 Health Impacts/Emissions

4.1 The subject of most concern and the area that the majority of questions were raised in relation to was the perceived health impacts of a RWT facility, in particular the impact from emissions. This was an area discussed at length in all sessions and was clearly an area of concern for residents in the area.

4.2 Attendees commented that the health impacts had never been explained by the Council throughout the project, and questions were asked about what the potential impacts could be, and how specific groups of residents such as children and the elderly could be affected.

4.3 Participants asked questions in relation to specific areas of concern such as the type of gases and particulates emitted from the facility.

5 Site Selection

5.1 Another area of major concern was the location of the proposed facilities and their close proximity to residential properties. These concerns were expressed particularly in relation to the former wholesale market site on the Cross Green Industrial Estate. The main question in relation to this area was why the sites, specifically the former wholesale market site, had been chosen without what was felt to be any consultation with the local residents. Many residents expressed views that the market site was too close to housing, and not appropriate for such a facility.

5.2 The site selection process was questioned, with residents challenging the officers present as to why the sites were deemed suitable and why there were no other sites across the city that were considered suitable. Attendees asked why a compulsory purchase of a suitable site away from residential areas had not or could not be carried out.

5.3 Residents present at the sessions expressed a strong interest in having a say over which site would be used for the facility, and questions about how this could be made possible were raised. It was felt that the role of the local resident in any consultation was limited and doubts were expressed as to whether they could have influence on the selection of the final site.

6 Transport and Traffic

- 6.1 The issues of transport and traffic were areas of concern as there was a belief expressed that the number of waste collection vehicles would increase in the area, which would have a negative impact on local communities. Questions were asked about what routes the vehicles would take to get to the facility, how many there would be, and the times of day.
- 6.2 Residents also raised issues associated with HGV vehicles that were using restricted, residential areas in order to reduce their travel times. Vehicles cutting through restricted areas was said to be an issue in some areas, and there was concern that this practice would increase with a greater number of vehicles accessing a site for waste disposal.

7 Communication

- 7.1 Some attendees at the meetings expressed views that the level of community engagement carried out by the Council was limited and was badly organised. Some participants commented that felt as though the Council was presenting residents with the outcome of a decision rather than involving the community in the decision making process. Residents asked whether representatives of the bidders involved would be present in future public meetings.
- 7.2 The organisation of the briefing sessions themselves was questioned in terms of who was invited to attend, why other areas had not been contacted and the timings of the meetings. Some also commented that there were low attendance numbers, and further meetings were requested for those unable to attend.
- 7.3 A limited number of attendees asked for large-scale publicly advertised meetings, so that more people could be involved.
- 7.4 Many residents asked for more information about the planning process, and for planning experts to be involved in future meetings. There was some confusion about the process going forward, and residents wanted a better understanding of how they could object to the Council's proposals if they wished to.

8 Other Council Projects (thought to be related to the waste treatment project).

- 8.1 There were questions asked about separate projects or developments being proposed in the area that were believed to be related to the RWT project. The project of most concern is the EASEL scheme, one aspect of which involves the redevelopment of housing in the area. Some believed that proposals for demolishing housing were linked to the construction of the waste plant.
- 8.2 The former wholesale market site has recently been closed for use as a Sunday car boot sale due to illegal trading taking place on the site. Some residents believed that this was a decision made to make way for the facility to be delivered on this site.
- 8.3 Some residents also asked whether the proposals for a railhead to the rear of the site would involve the delivery of waste from outside of the City to the facility via rail.

9 Other Issues

- 9.1 Some attendees raised questions about: the operation of the plant and the potential impact of odour and noise on residential areas; whether the development would have a negative impact on the value of housing surrounding the site; whether waste would be imported from outside the Leeds boundary for treatment at the proposed facility; how the facility would provide benefits to local communities in close proximity to the selected site for the facility.

10 Conclusions

- 10.1 The meetings have highlighted that there are areas of significant concern that exist within the communities that surround the two potential locations for the proposed RWT facility, and these are the key issues that the Council will need to address and respond to residents on as the project progresses. Whilst not included within this report, it should be noted that the Council has developed a detailed public communication and consultation strategy to ensure effective engagement with local communities during the remainder of the procurement process and ahead of any formal planning consultation.
- 10.2 It should again be noted that this information does not constitute consultation on the NRWDPD, but is intended to provide information on a specific proposal that will be considered in the context of the NRWDPD, and in which there has been significant public interest.

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