

**RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL
REPORT TO COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE**

Agenda Item No.

meeting date: TUESDAY 19TH JULY 2011
title: ISSUES DUE TO THE CLOSURE OF PETRE ARMS
HOUSEHOLD WASTE RECYCLING CENTRE AND THE
FURTHER RATIONALISATION OF HOUSEHOLD WASTE
RECYCLING CENTRES
submitted by: JOHN C HEAP - DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES
principal author: PETER MCGEORGE

1. PURPOSE

1.1 To advise Members on the impact on this Council due to the closure of the Petre Arms, Langho household waste recycling centre (HWRC) and,

1.2 To seek guidance from Members on responding to the issues contained within the Lancashire County Council consultation document for the further rationalisation of household waste recycling centres.

1.3 Relevance to the Council's aims and ambitions

- Mission Statement & Vision shared by Local Strategic Partnership
 - An area with an exceptional environment and quality of life for all; sustained by vital and vibrant market towns and villages acting as thriving service centres meeting the needs of residents, businesses and visitors.
- Council Objectives
 - We aim to be a well-managed Council providing efficient services based on identified customer needs.
 - Ensure access to services is available to all.
 - Treat everyone equally.
- Council Priorities
 - None.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC`s) are fundamental to the Waste Management Strategy for Lancashire. They have stated in the Strategy review document (Rubbish to Resources) `Whilst levels of recycling and composting have increased we want to ensure that all sites continue to maintain and improve their level of service and to ensure a consistent level of performance across the network of HWRC sites in the Partnership area`. They aim from 2010 to reuse, recycle or compost 70% of all waste delivered to each HWRC.

2.2 In 2009 Lancashire County Council employed consultants to undertake a strategic review of their Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) network.

2.3 The outcome following the completion of the review was the closure of 4 HWRCs, two of which affected Ribble Valley. The site in Padiham was closed

in September 2010 whilst the site at Petre Arms, Langho closed on 31st March 2011.

- 2.4 In February 2011, Lancashire County Council as part of its budget planning process decided to rationalise the network of HWRC`s by closing a further four facilities.
- 2.5 A consultation document recommending the closure of the sites at Garstang, Great Harwood, Bacup and Colne has recently been distributed for comments to both District and Parish Council`s. Whilst a copy of the document is available in the Members Room, Members can find the document on the following website link:
www3.lancashire.gov.uk/corporate/atoz/a_to_z/service.asp?u_id=3506&tab=1
3. ISSUES
 - 3.1 Residents in the catchment area covered by the Petre Arms HWRC were advised that one of the alternative sites to use following closure was the Great Harwood HWRC. It is now frustrating to find that this site is one of the additional four sites recommended for closure in the review.
 - 3.2 Concerns have also been raised that closure of sites would increase incidents of flytipping to which Lancashire County Council has responded by quoting Environment Agency statistics that more than 70% of flytipping in the UK is carried out by businesses which do not wish to pay for their waste disposal. They did not therefore expect instances of flytipping to increase.
 - 3.3 Following the closure of the Petre Arms HWRC we have experienced a significant increase in the number of flytipping incidents both overall and within the catchment area of that site.
 - 3.4 Although the County Council arranged for resources to be at the site to remove any flytipped waste following the first weeks after closure the percentage of the total number of reported incidents increased in the catchment area rose from 16% in February to 32% in April, 37% in May and 30% in June.
 - 3.5 Earlier correspondence from the County Council gave some assurances that they would assist with meeting the cost of clearing flytipping if it is adjacent to the site or if the costs/incidents of flytipping can be proven to have increased in the time immediately after Petre Arms closure. Costs in dealing with flytipping in the Petre Arms catchment area have risen from £364 in February to £924 in April, £1670 in May and £1089 in June. Evidence of the increased number of incidents and costs have now been provided to the County Council seeking not just a resolution of the costs but a way we can work together to take preventative/enforcement measures to reduce this unacceptable anti-social problem.
 - 3.6 Although early indications are that the demand for bulky / special collections is increasing we are monitoring the situation closely. Demand is being affected due to the high value of scrap metal that has seen an increase in the number of private collectors calling house to house and sometimes removing items such as white goods before our collection crew call.
 - 3.7 The `Rationalisation of Household Waste Recycling Centres` consultation document, July 2011, has been produced by the County Council as a result of their budget planning process and as reported earlier in this report recommends the closure of 4 sites.

- 3.8 Although none of the four recommended sites for closure are actually located within the Ribble Valley, our residents have been encouraged only very recently (following the closure of Petre Arms) to use the facility at Great Harwood.
- 3.9 The report provides an assessment of closure options for all sites within Lancashire. It recommended that neither Longridge nor Clitheroe HWRC are closed as part of that review, however it does suggest that 'should it be practical, further consideration should be given separately to the review – to further refining and improvement of the HWRC network by replacement of both facilities with a new HWRC which is more centrally located and better sized to accommodate the tonnages and visits generated within the District'. Many of the general issues used to form their arguments for closure of HWRC's quoted within the Executive summary of the report are also a cause for concern for your officers and we would certainly recommend that Members respond to these points.
- 3.9.1 The report states that the assessment of closure options has endeavoured to ensure that as many households as possible in each District remain with 6 miles of a HWRC. It is unclear whether the distance is by road or as a radius to each site. Appendix 1 shows the boundary of the Ribble Valley and the coloured circles represent a 6 mile radius from each site. The coloured lines within each circle represent 6 mile by road from each site. The plan shows quite clearly that there are huge areas of the authority not within the range outlined in their report. One could argue that the demographic nature of our rural authority has not been taken into account in the review and that the situation would be further exacerbated should Ribble Valley be reduced to one Site. Whilst Lancashire County Council accept that closures will have an impact on the communities they serve they are to carry out an Equality Analysis which will be reviewed on conclusion of the consultation which ends on 30th September 2011.
- 3.9.2 The County Council make the point that the nature of HWRC facilities has changed dramatically in recent years with a move to a use predominantly as recycling centres. They also suggest that the HWRC's are not intended to be used on a frequent basis for waste that are already collected through the 3 stream collection systems. There is no evidence or breakdown of the type of materials taken by householders to these facilities although from our records over 40% is rubble and hardcore. Also from experience much of the other waste taken to these sites is either larger bulky type waste or chargeable waste and it is still your officers view that in Ribble Valley householders use these facilities as a convenient and expedient method of dealing with waste not generally collected by the Council.
- 3.9.3 Surprisingly Lancashire County Council admit that they do not have any specific formal policy on the number or location of HWRC's that will be provided. The report claims that their preference is to keep the majority of households as close to a HWRC as possible. Such an approach would appear to sit comfortably with their statutory obligation to provide disposal facilities where the public can take their waste directly and that these facilities form a fundamental role in meeting the targets and objectives of the Municipal Waste Management Strategy.
- 3.9.4 However the rationalisation has reviewed the HWRC network on the basis of providing at least one HWRC and that automatically districts that only have one HWRC will be discounted from the evaluation. Clearly Ribble Valley will be at a disadvantage as the evaluation does not take account of the demands of rural communities or accessibility. This would suggest that the drivers for change are more financial than strategic.

- 3.9.5 In the section evaluating coverage within the Ribble Valley no consideration has been given to future growth in the number of domestic properties or the changes in householders habits due to the current economic climate. No account has been taken of the rural nature of the authority and the distances residents currently have to travel to dispose of their waste. It is not clear from the report what the County Council mean when they state that there are alternative suitable facilities relatively close by. The report claims that 50% of households in Ribble Valley are currently closest to Clitheroe HWRC and that in the event of its closure 80% of the residents would still be within 6 miles of a HWRC, even recognising that the statistics would be affected by the recommendation to close Great Harwood HWRC. I would again refer to the map in appendix 1 of this report and suggest that there are significantly less than 80% of our residents within 6 miles of a HWRC.
- 3.9.6 In the reports summary of Ribble Valley it is claimed that due to the closure of Petre Arms the remaining two sites will take the brunt of the material and will now be operating at capacity and that neither could accommodate the additional significant impact of the other one closing. It goes on to claim that the cost of operating two HWRC's is such that replacing them with one means that the operating savings can largely fund the capital outlay required for the construction of a new facility. (This strategic review appears somewhat belated coming after the closure of Petre Arms given that it does accept the difficulty in obtaining land and necessary consents for a new facility on greenbelt land that may ultimately prove prohibitive.)
- 3.9.7 Whilst the consultation document has no immediate implication on the Ribble Valley other than the further inconvenience to the residents already affected by the closure of Petre Arms I would recommend Members to respond to the consultation. I would also recommend that Members respond to the suggestion to consider closure of the remaining sites in Ribble Valley for replacement of a more centralised facility.

4. RISK ASSESSMENT

The approval of this report may have the following implications: -

Resources

- We now have evidence showing that as a result of the closure of Petre Arms HWRC there has been a significant increase in flytipping. Costs in dealing with flytipping have more than tripled and officers are currently seeking repayment from the County Council of any additional costs we incur.
- Currently any increase in demand for bulky /special collections have been managed within current resources with minimal impact on service delivery. Demand may increase due to the additional distances householders will be expected to travel to dispose of their waste.
- It is anticipated that closure of one or more of the remaining Household Waste Recycling Centre sites in the Ribble Valley would have at least similar if not greater consequences as the closure of Petre Arms.

Technical, Environmental & Legal

- Flytipping is an environmental problem and as well as a blight to the landscape can cause pollution or contamination to the surrounding area.

Political

- There are no specific political issues arising out of this report, although this is an area where the decisions made by one authority could be seen to have an impact on relationships between the two organisations.

Reputation

- There are no risks to the Councils reputation as a direct result of this report although we should make it clear to our residents that the County Council are responsible for the provision and operation of Household Waste Recycling Centres.

5. RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE

5.1 Note the report, and,

5.2 Instruct officers to respond to the consultation document objecting to the closure of these sites and commenting on the concerns raised in this report.

JOHN C HEAP
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

Background Papers – Rationalisation of Household Waste Recycling Centres –
Review July 2011 Waste Management Files
Rubbish to Resources (Municipal Waste Management Strategy for
Lancashire)

For further information please contact Peter McGeorge on 01200 414467.