

Budget Proposals 2016-17 Phase 2: Smallmead Household Waste Recycling Centre, Island Road

Consultation Summary Report

Why We Consulted?

From 3 November to 14 December 2015, we consulted on the need to make £10.8m of savings in 2016/17. £4.6m of these savings affected frontline services. The consultation generated over 2,500 responses and covered [47 individual budget proposals](#).

Shortly before Christmas, however, the Government began a [public consultation](#) on local government funding and proposed to reduce our funding by 44% (Revenue Support Grant). This announcement was totally unexpected, and we were faced with the challenge of finding an additional £7.6m of savings, whilst also considering increases in Council Tax.

In order to inform this process, we published a list of those proposals which would likely have a direct impact on service users, and sought the views from those affected and interested:

- to understand the likely impact
- to identify any measures to reduce their impact
- to explore any possible alternatives

Approach

All the proposals were published on the council's website on 15 February 2016 with feedback requested by 7 March 2016.

Respondents were directed to a [central index page](#), which outlined the overall background to the exercise, and provided links to each of the individual proposals.

Each individual page included further details on the specifics of what the proposal contained and what we thought the impact might be, along with any other elements we had taken into account.

Feedback was then invited through an online form and through a dedicated email address.

Each individual budget proposal was placed on our [Consultation Portal](#) which automatically notified those registered that an exercise had been launched. Members of the West Berkshire Community Panel (around 800 people) and local stakeholder charities, representative groups and partner organisations were also emailed directly, notifying them of the exercise and inviting their contributions.

Heads of Service made direct contact with those organisations affected by any of the budget proposals prior to them being made publicly available.

A press release was issued on the same date, and was further publicised through the council's Facebook and Twitter accounts.

The period in which we invited responses was reduced to three weeks in this case, instead of the usual six. This is because the funding announcement from government was both unexpected and very late in the financial year. It was not possible to extend the consultation period without negatively impacting the delivery of the 2016 council budget. In order to minimise the impact of this shorter timescale, we undertook extra activities to publicise the consultation in addition to our usual channels. This included making potential consultees

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aware of the impending exercise much earlier than normal via press releases and associated PR activities.

Proposal Background

We have a joint arrangement with the re3 waste partnership of Bracknell Forest, Reading and Wokingham Borough Councils, which allows residents from West Berkshire to use the Smallmead Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) at Island Road, Reading.

Proposal Details

To withdraw from the joint arrangement saving the council approximately £97,000.

Consultation Response

Number of Responses

In total, 69 responses were received, including:

- 64 from individuals
- Four from Town/Parish Councils
 - Holybrook Parish Council
 - Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council
 - Theale Parish council
 - Tilehurst Parish Council
- One from a District Councillor
 - Cllr Alan Macro

Summary of Main Points

All but one of the 69 responses objected to the proposal.

The majority of the objections were based upon the proposal being unsustainable due to the lack of facilities in the east, the overall impact on the environment, an increase in travel to the alternative facilities and therefore additional cost to residents, an increase in fly tipping, the savings not be realised due to the monitoring of HWRC use and disposal of waste elsewhere and finally that the West Berkshire HWRCs and Kerbside Collection are unsuitable as an alternative service.

The main counter proposals were to delay the proposal until the Padworth HWRC can be upgraded to the standard of Smallmead HWRC, pay more Council Tax or to pay a small fee to use Smallmead HWRC.

Summary of Responses by Question

1. Are you a user of this service?

Responses were: 58 Yes, 6 No and 5 with no response.

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2. What do you think we should be aware of in terms of how this proposal might impact people?

Overall concerns were raised about the impact on the environment, the unsustainability of the waste service and the lack of services in the east.

Specific concerns included:

- Discrimination against the east of the district who pay the same amount of Council tax but receive reduced services.
- Increased travel to West Berkshire facilities, increase fuel costs and time, increased impact on environment, (pollution/congestion) and that it would be inconvenient or no longer undertaken as part of travel to work or shops. Overall unsustainable as you should not travel distances to recycle and a reduction in recycling due to residents using the black bin as their alternative.
- The proposed alternative facilities are an unsuitable replacement; Padworth HWRC has shorter opening hours and less service, Newbury HWRC is too far away and the Kerbside Collection is already at capacity, doesn't accept many materials and could be misused.
- Increase use of alternative facilities could result in an increase in queuing and waiting times due to an increase in use and due to checking the address of users, all of which will impact on site staff and the quality of service.
- It will generate an increase in fly tipping (several fly tip hotspots were mentioned in the east) which will lead to an increase cost of clearance and an unsightly district. Impact on local land owners needing to clear an increase in fly tips.
- The savings are not genuine; costs of monitoring HWRC use, disposing of waste through West Berkshire services and clearance of fly tipping will offset savings.

3. Do you feel that this proposal will affect particular individuals more than others, and if so, how do you think we might help with this?

Responses did identify particular individuals who may be affected more than others the majority of these were regarding residents in the east of the district, which included specific areas of Mortimer, Burghfield, Tilehurst, Calcot and Holybrook. We received two responses about the impact on the elderly and one response each regarding people with disabilities, the elderly, young families, people doing DIY, the rural community due to an increase in fly tips, those who believe in the need for recycling, those working in Reading and council workers who will have to clear more fly tips.

Suggestions as to how we might be able to help with this included;

- Improving the Padworth HWRC by increasing the types of waste collected and increasing access / opening hours.
- Providing special arrangements for the disabled (*although these arrangements were not specified*).
- Changing the district borders and service boundaries; the service shouldn't be governed by borders and should be managed on a national scale and if WBC can not afford to look after the east change the eastern boundary.
- Making changes to the Kerbside Collection which included weekly collections, to provide bigger bins, the addition of extra materials and free bulky collections.

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4. Do you have any suggestions as to how this service might be delivered in a different way, but still achieve the same level of saving? If so, please provide details of any alternative proposals.

There were 11 main suggestions:

- Increase Council Tax.
- Delay the proposal until the Padworth HWRC is upgraded to the standard of Smallmead HWRC.
- Upgrade Padworth HWRC to the standard of Smallmead HWRC.
- Make a small charge at Smallmead HWRC.
- Set up a weekly collection point at a community location / or a recycling centre at Denefield School.
- Close Padworth and/or Newtown Road HWRC and redirect users to Smallmead HWRC.
- Stop Hampshire residents using West Berkshire HWRCs.
- Change the Waste Collection Service; the addition of extra materials, weekly recycling, provide a free bulky collection service, stop collecting food waste and additional green bins at a cost.

5. Is there any way that you, or your organisation, can contribute in helping to alleviate the impact of this proposal? If so, please provide details of how you can help.

Two responses were received offering to pay more Council Tax to keep the service.

6. Any further comments?

Other comments made which have not been included above were that:

- The decision has already been made so no point in responding.
- Is there enough capacity in the West Berkshire services or would they be under pressure?
- How would the service be policed?
- Are there any penalties for withdrawing from the arrangement?
- As a regular volunteer they should no longer be relied upon to contribute.
- Councillor allowances increase of 16% should be reconsidered.

Officer conclusion and recommendation can be found in the associated Overview of Responses and Recommendations document.

Jackie Ward
Waste Manager
Culture and Environmental Protection
9 March 2016

Please note: In order to allow everyone who wished the opportunity to contribute, feedback was not sampled. Therefore this wasn't a quantitative, statistically valid exercise. It was neither the premise, purpose, nor within the capability of the exercise, to determine the overall community's level of support, or views on the proposals, with any degree of confidence.

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The feedback captured therefore should be seen in the context of 'those who responded', rather than reflective of the wider community.

All the responses have been provided verbatim as an appendix to this report. Whilst this summary seeks to distil the key, substantive points made, it should also be read in conjunction with the more detailed verbatim comments to ensure a full, rounded perspective of the views and comments are considered.