

ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Tuesday 14 th January 2020
Report Subject	Outcome of Wales Audit Office Audit of Flintshire Household Recycling Centres
Cabinet Member	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member (Streetscene & Transportation)
Report Author	Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation)
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Flintshire County Council provide five Household Recycling Centres (HRC's) across the County that accept a wide range of recycling and waste materials from household properties. The HRC's are an integral part of the Council's Municipal Waste Strategy which was developed to maximise the amount of recycling collected in order to meet Welsh Government recycling targets.

In accordance with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 the Auditor General for Wales is required to examine public bodies to assess the extent to which they have acted in accordance with the sustainable development principles when setting their well-being objectives and strategies.

Consequently, the Wales Audit Office (WAO) undertook a survey of HRC's in Flintshire during April and May 2019 to consider the Council's current arrangements and performance against the vision set out in the Municipal Waste Strategy and to understand how service users feel about the HRC's and whether they feel they were able to inform service design and delivery. The survey was promoted by the WAO and through the Council's website and in addition the WAO visited all HRC's over five days during the Easter period in 2019 to speak to service users and gather their thoughts on the matter.

This report details the findings of the audit report and provides recommendations for service delivery in future years.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That Environment Overview and Scrutiny note the outcome of the Wales Audit Office audit on Flintshire Household Recycling Centres
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2	That Environment Overview and Scrutiny support the recommendation from the report to improve recycling understanding and the working arrangements on Flintshire Household Recycling Centres
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REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE BACKGROUND
1.01	<p>The strategy for HRC's is clearly set out in the Household Waste Collection Policy Appendix 1.</p> <p>Five HRC's are provided across the County located in Nercwys, Buckley, Oakenholt, Sandycroft and Greenfield. The sites accept a wide range of recyclable and waste materials from Flintshire households that cannot be collected at the kerbside. The waste streams accepted at the sites include wood, electrical items, hazardous waste such as paints and asbestos, carpets and non-recyclable wastes.</p>
1.02	<p>The HRC's provide a service to Flintshire residents only, with a van permit scheme in place to prevent the use of the sites by local trade companies.</p> <p>Each site promotes a 'meet and greet' service where site staff engage and inform service users of the most appropriate way to dispose of their items. Where residents bring black bags filled with waste, the site staff request that they be opened and inspected for recyclable materials.</p>
1.03	<p>Continued investment has been made into the HRC's with the Council providing capital funding of £0.6 million to complete HRC redevelopment works between 2017 to 2019, with an additional £1.7 million funding provided by the Welsh Government.</p> <p>This funding saw the full redevelopment of Buckley and Mold sites and the closure of Flint and Connah's Quay site to introduce a new, modern, fit for purpose site, located in Oakenholt.</p>
1.04	<p>The recycling performance across all of the HRC's currently stands at 80% which contributes to the overall total percentage of waste in Flintshire reused, recycled or composted. Currently 69% (2018-19).</p>
1.05	<p>In accordance with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 the Auditor General for Wales is required to examine public bodies to assess the extent to which they have acted in accordance with the sustainable development principles when setting their well-being objectives and strategies.</p> <p>Consequently the Wales Audit Office (WAO) undertook a survey of HRC's in Flintshire during April and May 2019 to consider the Council's current arrangements and performance against the vision set out in its Municipal Waste Strategy and to understand how services users feel about the HRC's and whether they feel they were able to inform service design and delivery.</p>

1.06	<p>The survey was promoted by the Wales Audit Office and through the Council's website. In addition, over five days, the WAO visited all HRC's over Easter 2019 to speak to service users. In total 887 responses were received. 448 at the HRC's and 399 online. Of the 887, only 23 were provided by people living outside the County in either Wrexham, Denbighshire or Cheshire.</p>
1.07	<p>On review of the audit and responses provided through the public survey, WAO reported the following observations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council continually reviews its waste collection policy • The Council continues to invest in HRC's • The Council has set clear priorities to provide high quality, sustainable HRC services • Staff investment remains static • Staff and Local Members have a good understanding of the need to maximise recycling • 65% of respondents felt they needed to use an HRC as the household collection service did not fully meet their full needs • Not all site staff were inspecting black bag waste on site • The most popular waste stream brought to the HRC's is 'general waste' • Most of survey responses were positive • Residents have concerns on operational hours • The Council pro-actively engages with its residents • The Council pro-actively engages with Local Members and Town/Community Council's • Some residents could not recall the Council engaging with them on service provision • The five most popular recycling items are wood, garden waste, cardboard, rubble and electrical items
1.08	<p>Most respondents to the survey were happy with Flintshire's HRC services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 71% think the quality of the service has improved in recent years; • 69% consider the service good value for money; and • 59% found staff are polite and helpful. <p>Most people spoken to were well informed about local HRC's:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 92% are aware what HRC services are available locally; and • 89% said it is easy for them to find the information they need about HRC's.
1.09	<p>In conclusion, the WAO have reported that the Council is following a clearly set out vision, continues to invest in its HRC's and has listened to service users to help it secure public satisfaction, but increasing public understanding of how to recycle more effectively has further potential benefit.</p>
1.10	<p>A recommendation to improve Flintshire residents understanding of recycling mirrors the outcome of the Council's own public survey which</p>

	took place during September and October 2019. On review of those responses it was clear that residents wanted to recycle but were unsure what could be recycled and where there waste could be dispose.
1.11	<p>It is therefore proposed to improve recycling awareness and improve the HRC provision through a number of changes which originate from the WAO report:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improved recycling information the HRC's 2. Improved recycling information on the Council website 3. The use of social media to promote recycling initiatives/ideas 4. Target areas of low recycling participation to inform of options 5. Improved engagement during service changes 6. Undertake annual customer surveys to gauge user feedback 7. Provide further training to HRC staff 8. Future opening times will be consistent throughout the year 9. Work with local charities to 'adopt' a HRC to promote recycling and wider local engagement
1.12	The survey also highlighted the concerns of residents in respect of the opening hours of the sites, particularly the fact that the hours change during the winter months. Residents requested regular opening hours throughout the year and it is therefore proposed that the opening hours remain the same throughout the year.

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	Waste strategy team and on site workforce will be required to promote and inform residents on recycling information and initiatives.
2.02	Revenue costs from existing budgets for recycling promotional documents.

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	Consultation with Cabinet Member.
3.02	Consultation with Wales Audit Office.
3.03	Consultation with Streetscene workforce.
3.04	Consultation with Household Recycling Centre service users and staff.

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	Improved information and education on recycling will reduce the disposal of recyclable materials ensuing that Welsh Government targets are achieved.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix 1 – Household Waste Collection Policy. Appendix 2 - Wales Audit Office audit report.

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	Contact Officer: Stephen Jones Telephone: 01352 704700 E-mail: stephen.o.jones@flintshire.gov.uk

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	HRC = Household Recycling Centre WAO – Wales Audit Office Information on Household Recycling Centres: https://www.flintshire.gov.uk/en/Resident/Bins-Recycling-and-Waste/Household-Waste-Recycling-Centres.aspx