

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No.

meeting date: 15 MARCH 2016
 title: THE IMPLICATIONS FOR RIBBLE VALLEY FOLLOWING THE DECISION BY LANCASHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL TO MOTHBALL THEIR WASTE TREATMENT FACILITIES AT FARINGTON AND THORNTON
 submitted by: DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES
 principal author: PETER McGEORGE

1 PURPOSE

1.1 To advise Members on the implications to Ribble Valley following the decision by Lancashire County Council to mothball their waste treatment facilities at the Farington and Thornton Waste Technology Parks.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:

- Community Objectives – To increase the recycling of waste material.
- Corporate Priorities – To be a well managed Council providing efficient services based on identified customer needs.
- Other Considerations – To protect and enhance the environmental quality of our area.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Since 1997 a number of reports have been presented to this Committee explaining our involvement in the creation of the Lancashire Waste Partnership (LWP). The LWP was set up by all the Lancashire local authorities to produce a Strategy that would guide the development of sustainable waste management in Lancashire.

2.2 The development of the Municipal Waste Management Strategy led to the commitment and introduction by districts of segregated waste collection systems whilst Lancashire County Council as the waste disposal authority was committed to providing the network of waste treatment facilities.

2.3 Significant investment was required by the waste collection authorities in the provision of segregated collection systems, which for Ribble Valley meant the purchase of a fleet of split bodied collection vehicles and the provision of wheeled bins. I would at this point remind Members of the £750k funding we received through the Weekly Collection Support Scheme grant in 2012. Whilst the condition of the grant was to retain weekly collections of general waste it was also to improve our recycling performance for which we are committed to the collection of food waste with garden waste until at least November 2017.

2.4 The waste streams recovered through our refuse and recycling collection system were determined by the types of treatment and separation facilities provided by the County

Council at their Waste Technology Parks at Farington and Thornton having been built as part of a £2billion, 25 year PFI scheme.

2.5 I should also remind Members, of the County Council's claim of exclusivity for all our collected waste streams, an issue that your officers continue to challenge.

2.6 Since the opening of the Waste Technology Parks our mixed food and garden waste has been treated through 'in-vessel' composting (IVC's) facilities, our general waste treated through Mechanical Biological Treatment (MBT) facilities and our co-mingled glass, cans and plastic bottles sorted in a Material Recycling Facility (MRF).

3 ISSUES

3.1 On 18th January 2016, officers received a letter from the County Council (Appendix A) advising that as part of its budget proposals for 2016 / 2017 a decision had been taken to cease the composting of mixed food and garden waste and only make facilities available for the composting of garden waste. They also confirmed that the 'in-vessel' composting facilities both at Farington and Thornton Waste Technology Parks would close from 31 March 2016. From subsequent telephone conversations with county officers it was clear from the answers we received that no consideration had been given to what effect their decisions would have on district authorities.

3.2 A meeting was held on Tuesday 2 February in Ribble Valley Council offices where it was explained to Steve Scott, Head of Service Waste Management at Lancashire County Council that our difficulty in ceasing the collection of mixed food and garden waste was due to our funding commitments. He was also advised that we had sought guidance from the Department for Communities and Local Government on the matter and that we had been instructed to write officially to the Minister seeking release from the terms and conditions of the funding. The outcome of the meeting was that as an alternative to landfilling the collected mixed food and garden waste the County Council offered to continue processing this material for the duration of the grant on the basis that Ribble Valley make up the difference in cost for processing the mixed waste in comparison to the County Council's windrow cost. Their estimate is that this would be in the region of £21,800 per annum.

3.3 Even without the difficulty of the terms and conditions of the funding grant, the unreasonably short timetable set by the County Council to cease the collection of food in the green wheeled bin would be difficult to achieve. The collection of food waste does not just affect gardened properties but many thousand terraced properties where smaller green wheeled bins were issued for the recovery of just food waste.

3.4 Members should be aware that food waste cannot be treated through open windrow, as this was introduced as measure to prevent the potential spread of disease by birds and wildlife.

3.5 At the time of writing this report we had not received any response from the Minister.

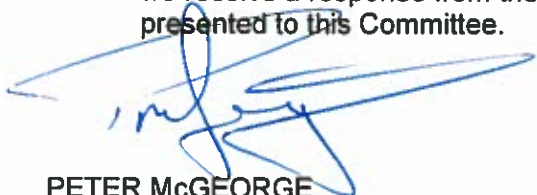
- 3.6 What is more concerning is that following the meeting with County Officers, headlines in the local press publicised that further budget cuts by the County Council would result in the mothballing of the Waste Technology Parks with a loss of more than 250 jobs.
- 3.7 Following the publicity, the County Council is keen to argue that the closure of the MBT facilities will not result in all the material being landfilled as they have alternative plans although procurement is not expected to be completed until at worst April 2017. Their budget proposals have based the cost of treatment of general/residual waste on the baseline price of landfill. They anticipate that much of this waste stream will be used for Refuse Derived Fuel (RDF) although recognise that pre-treatment will be required through the installation of local shredding facilities.
- 3.8 The in-vessel composting, and the MBT facilities have been closed with immediate effect. The Education centre will close mid 2016 allowing the facility to honour the commitment to schools booked on the programme although there will be very little for them to see. The MRF will for the foreseeable future continue to operate and accept commingled glass, cans and plastic from the districts. As a temporary measure the facilities will operate as waste transfer stations whilst they consider the long term options for the plant, land and buildings.
- 3.9 It is too early to fully evaluate the implications that the closures of these facilities may have on this authority although your officers are shortly to meet with other districts to consider the impacts collectively. The County Council view is that the recycling performance will not be affected to much as districts will continue to collect segregated dry recyclables and garden waste while the County will still provide recycling facilities at the Household Waste Recycling Centres.

4 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 4.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications:
- Resources – None at this stage, although to continue collecting mixed food and garden waste in the longer term will potentially incur costs in the region of £21,800.
 - Technical, Environmental and Legal – The long term implications are still as yet being evaluated.
 - Political – The mothballing of the Waste Technology Parks does bring into question the future of both the Municipal Waste Management Strategy for Lancashire and the Lancashire Waste Partnership.
 - Reputation – Clearly the closure of the PFI funded facilities is already generating adverse reaction from the residents of Lancashire and the withdrawal of recycling opportunities will not be readily accepted by the residents of Ribble Valley.
 - Equality & Diversity – eg No implications identified.

5 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The mothballing of the Waste Technology Parks and the changes made by the County Council will have significant implications to this authority which won't be fully known until we receive a response from the Minister, following which a future report will be presented to this Committee.



PETER McGEORGE
WASTE MANAGEMENT OFFICER



JOHN HEAP
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

BACKGROUND PAPERS

For further information please ask for Peter McGeorge, extension 4467.

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Your ref:
Our ref: SAS/JL/NH
Date: 18 January 2016

DIRECTOR OF
COMMUNITY SERVICES
21 JAN 2016

Dear Peter

FACILITIES FOR COMPOSTING OF CO-MINGLED GARDEN AND FOOD WASTE

You will be aware that in November 2015 as part its budget proposals for 2016-17, Lancashire County Council took the decision to cease the composting of co-mingled garden and food waste and only make facilities available for the composting of garden waste. I understand that Senior Executives and Leaders at your Authority were briefed on all of the County Council's budget proposals at the time.

Following subsequent discussions with Global Renewables, and consideration of the operational and seasonal implications of the closure of the in-vessel composting facilities at Farington and Thornton, I can now confirm that it is our intention to cease provision of these facilities from 31 March 2016. Alternative facilities, for the composting of garden waste only, will be provided thereafter.

I do appreciate that for some authorities, particularly those planning to charge for green waste collections, ceasing co-mingled garden and food waste collections would take place at some point anyway, whilst others will be disappointed at the need to make changes to collection services to accommodate this. Our audits suggest that of the significant quantity of co-mingled garden and food waste collected, less than 1% of the content is food. The complex nature of the in-vessel system required for dealing with food waste, by comparison to a simple windrow process for just garden waste, is hugely expensive and simply cannot be justified for such a small quantity of food.

I fully understand that the logistical implications of moving to a garden waste only collection will vary from authority to authority, and we will do our very best to assist you in how we jointly deliver this change. I am aware that you will have already had discussions with John Birch in this respect.

The very nature of the severe cuts in local authority funding make it inevitable that changes will continue to happen across all councils and all services. I trust that I can rely on your assistance in delivering this service change and sincerely thank you for your support.

Yours sincerely



Steve Scott
Head of Service Waste Management