

Environment & Economy Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting	Tuesday, 8 th October 2024
Report Subject	Review of Reduced Opening Hours at Household Recycling Centres
Cabinet Member	Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Streetscene and the Regional Transport Strategy
Report Author	Chief Officer for Streetscene and Transportation
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In August 2023, Streetscene & Transportation were instructed to find additional operational savings that would facilitate significant budget reductions as part of the Council's medium term financial strategy (MTFS). Streetscene Service Delivery put forward a range of options for members to consider.

This report, which has been requested by members of the Environment and Economy Overview and Scrutiny Committee, presents an overview of the approved changes to the operation of household recycling centres (HRC) within the county, as laid out in the Streetscene and Transportation efficiencies proposal for 2024/25. The changes were proposed to optimise efficiency, reduce costs, and explore potential income streams while maintaining essential services for the community. This report focuses on the first phase of the change programme, part-time opening for HRC sites.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That the Environment & Economy Overview & Scrutiny Committee notes / welcomes the update following the approved changes to opening hours at the household recycling centres (HRCs)
2	That the Environment & Economy Overview & Scrutiny Committee endorses the introduction of a booking system which would reduce waiting times and improve the customer experience.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	BACKGROUND
1.01	<p>Streetscene Service Delivery are continually exploring ways to provide operational savings and efficiencies to ensure value for money and high levels of quality services. In Quarter 1 of 2023-2024, Service Delivery undertook a review of the HRC staffing structure to reduce the number of staff on site per day. This change reduced the number of charge hands and agency staff required per week and realised an operational reduction in costs for the service. However, this left only one option for further savings within this area of the service, reduced opening hours at the HRCs.</p> <p>In August 2023, Streetscene Service Delivery were instructed to find additional operational savings that would facilitate significant budget reductions as part of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.</p> <p>Service Delivery put forward several options, although not all were supported or accepted. The following changes to HRC provision were supported and approved by County Council as part of the 2024/25 budget setting.</p> <p>The HRC Change Programme was divided into 3 distinct phases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Phase 1 – Part-Time Opening Times• Phase 2 – DIY / Non-household Waste• Phase 3 – Trade and Business Site
1.02	SERVICE CHANGE 1 - Part-Time Opening of HRC Sites
	<p>Part-Time Opening of HRC Sites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reduction of opening days from 7 to 5 days a week, excluding weekends.• Expected implementation date: May 1st, 2024.• Estimated annual budget impact: £0.220m.• Budget impact via reduced agency and staff hours. <p>Prior to the change, the Council operated five HRCs across the county, which were open from 9am until 5pm, over 7 days per week with staff rostered on a five-day working pattern. This arrangement presented significant inefficiencies in rostering, resulting in inflated staff and agency costs.</p> <p>Since the introduction of the vehicle permit scheme in 2023, traffic counts and tonnages at each site have reduced, meaning that each site experiences large variations in the number of visitors per hour and per day.</p> <p>Reducing the opening schedule was preferred by both officers and Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, over closing one site completely.</p> <p>Reducing the opening hours across all sites reduces the number of operatives required to cover the HRC sites and allows them to return to the general pool of Streetscene workforce to be redeployed in other essential frontline service. This in turn reduces the requirement for agency and overtime to deliver essential services across the wider service.</p>

1.03

The table below shows the number of operatives required per day at each site and gives an indicative figure of salary requirements. This includes on-costs such as pension contribution and other employee benefits therefore illustrating the full cost per day. The table shows the savings between the seven-day opening model and the five-day opening models, which equates to £216,884.10.

	Greenfield	Buckley	Mold	Sandycroft	Oakenholt	Totals
Operatives per day	4	4	3	3	3	17
Operatives Cost per Day	£490.69	£490.69	£368.02	£368.02	£368.02	£2,085.42
362 Days per Year (7 day)	£177,629.06	£177,629.06	£133,221.79	£133,221.79	£133,221.79	£754,923.49
258 Days per Year (5 day)	£126,597.50	£126,597.50	£94,948.13	£94,948.13	£94,948.13	£538,039.39
						£216,884.10

It is important to note that the number of staff per day does not reflect the total number within the HRC team. In order to cover weekends, annual leave, sickness and training, a team of 22 Streetscene operatives is required as a minimum to ensure that the weekly rota is fully covered.

1.04

Options Considered for Opening Models

The delivery of part time opening was divided into two available options with both customer satisfaction and staff work life balance considered; however, the requirement to operate on a reduced budget was the key component to the decision-making process. The following two options were presented to the Cabinet Member, Chief Officer Team, and Trade Unions (TUs): -

Option 1	Greenfield	Buckley	Mold	Sandycroft	Oakenholt
Monday	CLOSED	9AM - 5PM	9AM - 5PM	CLOSED	9AM - 5PM
Tuesday	9AM - 5PM	CLOSED	9AM - 5PM	9AM - 5PM	CLOSED
Wednesday	CLOSED	9AM - 5PM	CLOSED	9AM - 5PM	9AM - 5PM
Thursday	9AM - 5PM	CLOSED	9AM - 5PM	CLOSED	9AM - 5PM
Friday	9AM - 5PM	9AM - 5PM	CLOSED	9AM - 5PM	CLOSED
Saturday	9AM - 5PM	9AM - 5PM	9AM - 5PM	9AM - 5PM	9AM - 5PM
Sunday	9AM - 5PM	9AM - 5PM	9AM - 5PM	9AM - 5PM	9AM - 5PM
Total Hours per site	40	40	40	40	40

Option 1 – This option offered staggered opening hours across all domestic sites and generated the lowest budget efficiency. This model went against the recommendation of the Scrutiny Committee to retain services on Mondays, Fridays and weekends. This schedule ensured that there would be sites open each day; however, the pattern requires more staff and offered much less savings. It also presented undesirable working patterns for staff, combining weekend working with split days off. Option 1 invited resistance from the TUs and staff, which could have resulted in higher absence rates, increased overtime, and agency costs thus negating any potential efficiency.

Option 2	Greenfield	Buckley	Mold	Sandycroft	Oakenholt
Monday	9AM - 5PM	9AM - 5PM	9AM - 5PM	9AM - 5PM	9AM - 5PM
Tuesday	CLOSED	CLOSED	9AM - 5PM	9AM - 5PM	CLOSED
Wednesday	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED	CLOSED
Thursday	9AM - 5PM	9AM - 5PM	CLOSED	CLOSED	9AM - 5PM
Friday	9AM - 5PM	9AM - 5PM	9AM - 5PM	9AM - 5PM	9AM - 5PM
Saturday	9AM - 5PM	9AM - 5PM	9AM - 5PM	9AM - 5PM	9AM - 5PM
Sunday	9AM - 5PM	9AM - 5PM	9AM - 5PM	9AM - 5PM	9AM - 5PM
Weekly Hours per site	40	40	40	40	40

Option 2 – This option prioritised operational efficiency and staff work-life balance. Option 2 also allowed the service to realise the full budget efficiency. This option sees all sites closed 2 days sequentially, but no provision on a Wednesday. It did, however, meet the request of the Scrutiny Committee to retain services on Mondays, Fridays and weekends. Conversely, this schedule improved rostering and staff working patterns, reducing the potential for higher absence rates, increased overtime, and agency costs, and allowing non-working days to be taken as two consecutive days.

The Chief Officer Team, Cabinet Member and Trade Unions all supported Option 2 as the preferred way forward.

1.05 **Progress to Date**

The total closure of all sites one day per week has given Supervisors the opportunity to carry out essential maintenance and contractor collections when sites are closed, thereby reducing the risk to staff and customers when on site.

In the first four weeks following the change, increased queues to access the sites were reported, particularly in Buckley where access is shared by surrounding businesses and the football ground. This has become less of an issue over time and customers have become more accustomed to the new schedule. The ideal solution to this issue in future would be an online booking system for all customers.

The majority of local authorities across Wales now operate a booking system for customers to access HRCs, which has multiple benefits:

- Reduced customer queues and waiting times
- Greater traffic flow control
- Reduced traffic hazards on site
- Real visitor data to predict and manage trends.
- Improved site efficiency e.g. availability of skips, use of site plant, equipment and transport vehicles
- Improved demand management and enable more time to help visitors to segregate their waste streams, recycle more and reduce contamination.
- Prevent out of county residents using the sites.
- Enable sites to become more data driven e.g. waste types and volumes – enables us to understand waste trends, peak times, and popular disposal materials.
- Facilitate compliance by tracking and monitoring waste types and quantities, ensuring that all waste adheres to the latest regulations.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevent illegal disposal and ensures proper handling of hazardous materials. <p>To date, there has been no impact on the recycling performance for each site. In addition, Streetscene has not experienced an increase of fly tipping since the change.</p>
2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	<p>Revenue: there are currently no implications for the approved revenue budget for this service for either the current financial year or for future financial years, and the change will realise the efficiencies put forward.</p> <p>Capital: there are no implications for the approved capital programme for either the current financial year or for future financial years</p> <p>Human Resources: there are no implications for additional capacity or for any change to current workforce structures or roles, although, following consultation with HR, trade unions and staff, working patterns were adjusted.</p>

3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT
3.01	<p>The following risks were identified as part of project and through operational management. Each risk was assessed in terms of likelihood and potential impact, with mitigation strategies developed accordingly.</p> <p>Risk 1: Customer Dissatisfaction and Increased Waiting Times Likelihood: Medium Impact: Medium to High Mitigation: The phased introduction of a part-time opening schedule initially frustrated some customers accustomed to a seven-day service. However, communication strategies, including signage, social media, and council publications, helped inform residents about the changes. The proposed online booking system will further mitigate this risk by controlling site access, reducing queues, and improving the overall customer experience.</p> <p>Risk 2: Increased Fly-Tipping Likelihood: Low to Medium Impact: High Mitigation: Although no significant increase in fly-tipping was reported following the reduction in HRC opening hours, this remained a key concern. A combination of enhanced surveillance, more frequent monitoring of illegal dumping hotspots, and collaboration with enforcement teams has been utilised to address this risk. The Council also promoted awareness campaigns to discourage illegal waste disposal and emphasised the continued availability of waste services.</p> <p>Risk 3: Operational and Staff Workload Disruption Likelihood: Low Impact: Medium Mitigation: The restructuring of staff rosters into a more efficient, sequential closure model reduced the potential for increased absenteeism, overtime, and</p>

	<p>associated agency costs. Regular staff feedback and engagement with Trade Unions helped identify any emerging issues and ensured work-life balance improvements were maintained.</p> <p>Risk 4: Inefficiencies in Waste Management and Recycling Targets Likelihood: Low Impact: Medium Mitigation: Recycling data is monitored and reviewed to ensure that the changes have not negatively impacted the Council’s recycling performance. The introduction of a booking system will improve data collection, enabling the service to adjust strategies based on waste trends.</p> <p>Risk 5: Traffic Management and Congestion at Sites Likelihood: Medium Impact: Medium to High Mitigation: Congestion issues were identified in some locations, such as Buckley, following the introduction of the new schedule. An online booking system will facilitate managed traffic flows and reduced the risk of congestion.</p> <p>Risk 6: Health and Safety Risks to Staff and Visitors Likelihood: Low Impact: High Mitigation: With part-time site closures, Supervisors and Mangers, have dedicated time to conduct maintenance and contractor collections, reducing health and safety risks to both staff and visitors during operational hours. Health and safety training and audits are conducted regularly to ensure compliance with all relevant regulations.</p> <p>Risk Monitoring and Reporting: All identified risks are actively monitored and reported to the Senior Management Team. Key risks, particularly around customer satisfaction, recycling performance and environmental compliance, are monitored as part of the Council's ongoing risk management processes.</p>
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4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT
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4.01	Consultation undertaken with the Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Streetscene and the Regional Transport Strategy, three Trade Unions (UNITE, UNISON and GMB); Chief Officer Team and with the Environment and Economy Overview and Scrutiny Committee prior to the proposals being approved.
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5.00	APPENDICES
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5.01	None
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6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
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6.01	None
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7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
7.01	Contact Officer: Christopher Goddard, Streetscene Service Manager Telephone: 07867 192311 E-mail: Christopher.Goddard@Flintshire.gov.uk

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS These are provided corporately on the Infonet (link) and maintained by the Executive Office
8.01	HRC – Household Recycling Centre