



**WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL**

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Name and date of Committee	Cabinet: Wednesday 18 November 2020
Report Number	Agenda Item No. 9
Subject	Approval of the Approach to Community Recycling (Bring Sites) In West Oxfordshire
Wards affected	ALL
Accountable member	Cllr Norman MacRae, Cabinet Member for Environment Email: norman.macrae@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Scott Williams, Business Manager – Waste Email: scott.williams@publicagroup.uk
Summary/Purpose	To update Members on the issues being experienced at the community recycling (bring sites) in West Oxfordshire and to seek approval for their permanent removal.
Annex	Annex A – List of all bring sites and facilities Annex B – Extract from draft minutes of Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Thursday 1 October 2020
Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) That the risks and financial, and performance related implications of removing the community recycling (bring site) facilities be noted, as set out in this report; b) That approval be given for the permanent removal of the community recycling (bring site) facilities, in a structured and managed way, with effective communication in order to mitigate the issues being experienced with high levels of contamination, fly tipping and misuse; and c) That approval be given for the bulky waste collection standard number of items to be increased from 3 to 4, with the fee remaining at £27.68 in the 2021-22 financial year.
Corporate priorities	The proposal contained within this report supports the Council priority: Modern Council Services and Sustainable Finance - Delivering excellent modern services whilst ensuring the financial sustainability of the Council?
Key Decision	Yes
Exempt	No
Consultees/ Consultation	Councillor Norman MacRae and Senior Officers from the Council and Publica have been consulted on this report and the detail contained within.

I. BACKGROUND

- I.1. Bring site provision has been part of the waste service offered by West Oxfordshire District Council for over 15 years.
- I.2. The bring sites have not increased in size over time to cope with increasing in housing (in particularly in Witney, Carterton and Chipping Norton), and higher levels of recyclable waste being deposited by residents, and this has accelerated during the Covid-19 pandemic with an increase in online shopping and packaging that residents want to dispose of.
- I.3. Sites are frequently subject to recycling material being left outside the bins (littering) and non-recyclable items being left including mattresses, large waste electricals, and increasingly hazardous waste. There is evidence that material is left by traders who are not entitled to dispose of items at the centres and also people deliberately disposing of general waste and/or using them as a Household Recycling Centre (HRC). County Council operated HRC's are much larger and have the ability for the public to dispose of recyclables and general waste. However, they are continually monitored by an on-site team and so they can then police what is being disposed of. Examples of the excess waste/recyclables left and fly-tipping are in the two photographs below.



Chipping Norton



Witney

- I.4. The council has 15 recycling bring sites in the district (3 of which are on private caravan/camping parks) Shown in [Annex A](#).
- I.5. All 15 sites vary in size but they all offer residents the opportunity to recycle mixed recycling and glass, 5 offer small electrical recycling (WEEE) and 11 offer textile recycling.
- I.6. All bring sites banks (dry mixed recycling including paper, cardboard, cans, tins and plastics – DMR and glass) are serviced by the councils waste contractor UBICO with the exception of textiles banks which are privately emptied by SOEX LTD, through a separate contract.
- I.7. South Oxfordshire and Vale of the White Horse District Councils' removed the majority of their recycling bring sites in approximately 2015, but just kept clothing banks. Cherwell still has bring banks, but they are mainly for glass as they don't accept that material as part of their kerbside recycling collections.
- I.8. During 2019/2020 West Oxfordshire District Council collected 12,688 tonnes of kerbside recycling in comparison to approximately 851 tonnes from the recycling bring sites - this accounted for approximately 6.7% of the authority's total recycling performance.

- 1.9. This report was considered by Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 1 October, and the draft minute from that meeting is included at [Annex B](#).

2. MAIN POINTS

- 2.1. Bring sites have been a tried and trusted approach enabling residents to recycle their waste for many years, but in current times where the Council now provides an effective kerbside collection service for a substantial number of items, the negatives in not being able to police the sites usage far outweigh the positives in the amount and quality of material received.
- 2.2. The Council is spending significant costs on clearing material being left outside the bins (littering) and this resource could be redeployed on other street cleansing activities.
- 2.3. There is some evidence that bring sites are used by traders and so there are likely to be companies out there which are not paying for their recycling waste to be collected and processed, which means that the tax payer is picking up a proportion of the costs. In addition, these users are breaking the law by not honouring their duty-of-care responsibilities in arranging for a reputable waste collection contractor to collect and properly dispose of their waste. As a secondary dis-benefit it's likely that they are not using the Councils trade recycling collection service, which is impacting on the income received.
- 2.4. Whilst the bring sites have been a useful alternative to the kerbside service during the Covid-19 pandemic and associated lockdown, and allowed residents to dispose of larger amounts of recycling, particularly in light of the increase in home deliveries, the Council has had to bear a significant financial cost to maintain these sites and respond to the misuse and fly-tipping.
- 2.5. There is a risk that recycling performance will decrease by 6.7% if the bring sites were removed from service and that material didn't transfer into the kerbside service, but on balance the anticipated benefits both financial, reputational and in building in greater capacity for the UBICO operation, look to outweigh this.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Costs (Operational)

- 3.1. Pre January 2018 the service ran independently with a separate truck and crew with the below break down of costs:

Truck cost (capital)	£210,000
Depreciate 7yrs	£30,000
Crew pa x 2	£65,000
Fuel pa	£30,000
Maintenance	£15,000
Narrow support	£20,000
Streets fly tipping	£40,000
Total revenue p.a.	£200,000

- 3.2. In Jan 2018, UBICO made efficiencies and included bring sites as part of the domestic recycling rounds, so costs were absorbed into this service and a breakdown of that budget is not available. That does however mean that there isn't a dedicated resource emptying the bring site bins and instead it is divided amongst all of the Ubico recycling collection crews on the basis that the closest domestic round to a particular site is responsible for collecting.

Fly tipping clearance

- 3.3. During April, May and June this year cleansing crews were visiting bring sites constantly to clear material being left outside the bins (fly-tips). Higher profile sites such as Chipping Norton are cleared daily and smaller sites 2-3 times per week.
- 3.4. The work is carried out by agency staff using a street cleansing truck (taken off other duties) at a cost of approximately £5,000 in staffing alone (over the 12 weeks).
- 3.5. In addition, the Council, through Publica, has to deal with complaints about the bring sites from residents and parish councils as well as undertake investigations into littering / fly-tipping. For the purposes of this review we have made a resource assumption that 0.5fte which is £15,000.
- 3.6. The Council receives two income streams for the recycling material collected from the bring sites:
- Sale of the textile material to the re-processor SOEX at income of £255 per tonne (pre-Covid 19). During the pandemic the textile commodity market have been significantly affected which has resulted in the Council not receiving any income for this material.
 - Recycling credits paid by Oxfordshire County Council (OCC). During 2019/2020 the Council received £54.55 from OCC for every tonne of material collected for recycling from the bring sites.
- 3.7. A summary of the income and costs of the service are below for the financial year 2019-2020

Recycling credits (dry recycling DMR and glass)	£40,171
Recycling credit and payment for textiles	£35,598
Total income	£75,768
Processing Fees (SUEZ)	£51,510
Net Income	£24,258

- 3.8. This would indicate that there would be a net reduction in income of £24,258 to the authority if the bring sites were removed.
- 3.9. Whilst it would not be possible to reduce the number of collection crews as the function is spread across the entire fleet, there would be a cost reduction in labour and lower fuel usage as a result of the Ubico recycling crews not emptying the bring sites which is estimated to be £23,000, meaning that the financial implications for the Council are likely to be negligible. In addition, there would be a non-cashable saving from not dealing with complaints of misuse and material being left outside the banks (fly-tipping) (£15,000). There may be an option to partially reduce resources further in the future, but this would have to be completed as part of a modelling exercise and would likely involve collection round optimisation which would result in collection day changes for some residents. In addition, by doing this it would limit the recycling service ability to absorb future housing growth, meaning that additional resources would then be required by UBICO sooner than anticipated.
- 3.10. In recent months Asda in Carterton and four parish councils (Burford, Clanfield, Hanborough and Eynsham) have asked the council to remove the bring sites on their property / in their parish. This could have a negative impact on the other sites, with increased use and misuse.
- 3.11. If the bring sites were removed then it is recommended that a budget of up to £20,000 be allocated for site cleansing and the erection of new signs informing residents that they would no longer be able to deposit recycling items at the sites. The signs would also inform users

that they could recycle those items either by way of the kerbside service, or by using their local Household Recycling Centre and that fly-tipping is a criminal offence.

- 3.12. To support the proposed removal, a communications strategy is being formulated which will include setting out the options available to residents, to ensure that they can continue recycling this material predominantly by way of the kerbside collection service. For larger items which have been deposited at the bring sites previously, the Bulky Waste Service and Household Recycling Centres will be promoted.
- 3.13. A wider review of the Bulky Waste Service is underway, but as a mitigating measure to counter increased fly-tipping as a result of the removal of the bring sites, it would be proposed that the standard number of acceptable items for bulky waste collection, be increased from 3 to 4 (as was the case in previous years) with the fee remaining at £27.68.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1. The Council is legally required to collect waste under the Environmental Protection Act however, there is no requirement to offer bring sites as a means of collection.

5. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 5.1. The Pros and Cons of removing the bring sites are set out below:

Pros

- Financial implications appear to be negligible. It would offer a financial benefit in the current scenario where greater emptying and cleansing is being required. Would also provide non-cashable savings in officer time.
- Pushes businesses towards using the council commercial waste service
- Reduces cost of clearing fly-tips
- Frees up cleansing staff for other duties
- Reduces complaints / calls / press enquiries and potentially reputational damage
- Reduces contamination in DMR
- Builds in capacity to the recycling collection rounds to be able to absorb property growth in the future
- Reduces demand on ERS team in having to investigate fly-tipping / littering with frequently no evidence present
- Potential increased use (and associated income) of the bulky waste collection service, particularly given that the number of items included in the initial fee of £27.68 will increase from 3 to 4

Cons

- Up to £20,000 one off costs required to support removal process.
- A potential small reduction in recycling performance & recycling credit income but this could be offset by campaigns and increase in housing in the district
- It's difficult to establish monetary savings from the UBICO contract, other than a reduction in agency staffing and fuel from fly-tipping collection (£23,000). Further work is required on this as part of the renewal of the contract in 2022.
- Fly tipping may increase in other potentially harder to reach areas although the risk of this is low as material being left outside the bins is left by residents who don't see this as an offence.

- Removal may result in an increase in recycling collected at kerbside and increased costs on that service for DMR processing by Suez although the data indicates bring sites only account for 6.7% of the total. UBICO has already confirmed that they have sufficient capacity to cope with an increase in demand from a collection perspective
- Removal of service provided by WODC may lead to criticism but the communications needs to be clear that residents have an effective kerbside service and can request more boxes.
- May result in higher usage of County Council run household recycling centres (Dix Pit).
- May result in an increase in requests for 360 recycling bins and the associated higher container costs so the council will need to adopt a policy to manage this.

6. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 6.1. The recommendations within this report will have a neutral effect on the different service users, customers and staff, because the Council will retain its kerbside recycling collection service and the County Council operated Household Recycling Centre's will also remain available. The only negative effect will likely be felt by traders who currently use the facilities illegally.

7. CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. Not all of the recycling material captured by the bring sites is likely to transfer over to the kerbside service. However, the reduction in fuel used by UBICO in order to service these sites and the ongoing reduction in fly-tipping will lessen the impact this proposal has in the amount of Co2 produced and the effect on the climate.

8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 8.1. The alternatives to removing the bring sites would be to:
- 8.2. Retain the sites, accepting that they are prone to significant fly tipping, misuse and contamination;
- 8.3. Retain only the larger sites and partially mitigate the problems currently being experienced in having fewer to service however acknowledging that in doing so, this may increase the fly-tipping, misuse and contamination at the remaining sites and result in an increase in net cost for the Council by having to service more frequently.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 9.1. None

List of all bring sites and facilities

Recycling bank site	Glass	Paper	Cans	Card	Plastics	Textiles	Shoes	Electricals
Bablock Hythe Caravan Park	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Burford Garden Centre	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Carterton, Black Bourton Rd car park	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Charlbury Spendlove Centre car park	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Chipping Norton Albion Street car park	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Chipping Norton Caravan & Camping park	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Chipping Norton New Street car park	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ducklington Aston Rd car park	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Hardwick Park Caravan Site	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Stonesfield Field Close	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Tackley Village Hall	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Witney Hailey Rd	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Witney Moorland Rd	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Witney Woodford Way car park	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Woodstock Hensington Rd car park	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

**EXTRACT FROM DRAFT MINUTES OF ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: THURSDAY 1 OCTOBER 2020**

COMMUNITY RECYCLING: BRING SITES IN WEST OXFORDSHIRE

The Committee considered the report of the Business Manager – Waste, which updated Members on the issues being experienced at the community recycling (bring sites) in West Oxfordshire. The report being submitted to Cabinet sought approval for the bring sites' permanent removal.

The scrutiny committee were being asked to take into account the risks and financial and performance related implications of removing the community recycling (bring site) facilities and submit any comments to Cabinet.

Scott Williams, Business Manager – Waste, introduced the report and highlighted the significant issues being experienced with the misuse of these sites.

Councillor Leffman highlighted the problem encountered by residents of towns and villages located in the North of the District who had to travel tens of miles to reach a recycling centre. Councillor Leffman suggested that the location of the bring sites should be considered before being closed, because forcing residents to drive long journeys to these sites did not correspond with the Council's commitment to Climate Change.

Some Members recognised the misuse of the sites and many had personal experiences of the problems being encountered. It was suggested that residents should be asked their opinion before the sites were closed and it was agreed that education and communication to residents was key.

In response to questions from Members, Mr Williams advised that when the bring sites were closed in the Cotswold District, it did not result in an increase of fly-tipping. General misuse of the sites was by traders who did not want to sign up to the Trade Waste system and the Bulky Waste service proved residents with an alternative, although it was noted there was a cost to this.

With regard to a question regarding the option of installing CCTV and prosecuting individuals, Mr Williams reminded Members that this would come at a cost, as would monitoring the system and the officer time taken to bring cases to court.

Following a query raised regarding clothing banks, Mr Williams advised that the Council was working with the clothing banks to ensure the service continued effectively, following a slow down due to lockdown. He also stated that the income received from recycling cardboard was running at a negative and authorities were having to pay for recycling.

There was a general feeling that there should not be a blanket closure of the sites because residents should not be disadvantaged by the actions of the minority. Councillor Coul felt that it would become known that the Council was prosecuting fly-tippers and this would have an impact on the frequency of instances.

The Committee agreed that closures should not take place across the board until the location of each site had been considered in relation to the travel time needed to reach alternative sites, the option of CCTV had been explored and more focus was placed on prosecuting fly-tippers and carrying out enforcement.

It was also supported that residents should be consulted with before any sites were closed permanently.

The Cabinet Member for the Environment addressed Members and thanked them for the detailed debate. He provided an update on the enforcement measures carried out recently with nine prosecutions being carried out in the form of fixed penalty notices.

Having considered the report and having heard from the officers and Members present the Committee

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the risks and financial, and performance related implications of removing the community recycling (bring site) facilities are noted;
- (b) That Cabinet take into account that the permanent removal of the community recycling (bring site) facilities should not take place until the location of each site has been considered in relation to the travel time needed to reach alternative sites, the option of CCTV has been explored and more focus has been placed on prosecuting fly-tippers and carrying out enforcement. However, effective communication was necessary in order to mitigate the issues being experienced with high levels of contamination, fly tipping and misuse; and
- (c) The Committee considered that residents should be consulted prior to the closure of sites.