



Committee and Date
Cabinet
17 July 2024

Item

Public



Household Waste Recycling Centres

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1. Synopsis

To review the provision of Household Recycling Centres (HRCs) across Shropshire and as part of the Councils savings proposal to assess the potential closure of two sites and or reduction of opening hours for all sites.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 Shropshire Council is facing unprecedented financial pressure, and we must make £62m of savings in 2024/25 to keep a balanced budget and our plans include difficult decisions. We must look at other ways of creating income and reducing costs so that we can protect essential frontline services for those residents most in need. The management and operational costs associated with operating five household recycling centres have been reviewed as they are currently open 7 days a week for 52 weeks of the year.
- 2.2 The council’s budget for 2024/25 includes a target to reduce the costs of household recycling centres by £0.2m per annum over the medium-term financial strategy period.
- 2.3 Council officers have worked with Veolia Shropshire to review several options including closure of one or more sites and a reduction in opening hours. The review has also taken into account the potential to implement a booking system which enables HRC users to book a time and date to use their preferred centre to reduce queues at peak times and improve the efficiency of the operations at each site.
- 2.4 As part of the green waste subscription consultation process respondents were asked to rank the following options for the HRC. Table 1 shows that the overall preference is to reduce the operation hours at all 5 HRC.

Table 1. Ranking of HRC Options

Option	Average Rank
Reducing the operating hours of all 5 HRCs in Shropshire instead of closing two centres permanently	1
Closing two HRCs in Shropshire in accordance with the council's target to achieve £62m in savings	2
Pay a higher annual subscription for garden waste collection and keep all HRCs open seven days a week	3

2.5 Whilst there will be some savings associated with the closure of HRCs, there are also costs, penalties and loss of revenue that will arise, realistically these cannot be quantified at this stage in advance of any closures, particularly as we do not know which sites would be closed nor the impact on waste flows as a result.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 It is recommended that all five household recycling sites remain open, but the operational hours are reduced through the closure of all the sites for at least one day a week (Wednesday /Thursday) to contribute towards the required saving target and this to be reviewed over the next six months.
- 3.2 It is recommended that a booking system is implemented at all the sites, through an online system and open to all Shropshire residents with the additional option of agree procedures and costs with neighbouring authorities for their residents who live close to the Shropshire border to potentially use the sites in the future.

Report

4. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

- 4.1. The following scenarios are likely to arise should the HRCs close.
- Materials of value such as scrap metal and clothing are likely to either be lost to the residual waste stream or be captured by other organisations (scrap merchants, textile banks/charities) from areas where HRCs are closed. This would result in a loss of revenue to the Contract and a reduction in recycling performance.
 - The tonnage of garden waste would most likely reduce with members of the public using other means of disposal. Whilst a reduction in garden waste tonnage would reduce composting costs, a significant proportion of this waste could enter the residual waste stream, particularly if paid for garden waste collections are introduced. Any compost savings are likely to be offset by an increase in residual waste and could result in additional costs particularly if paid for garden waste collections are introduced. Again, this will lead to a drop in recycling performance.
 - As closures will mean the remaining HRCs will be busier than before, members of the public are less likely to take their time to separate waste streams and maximise recycling resulting in additional costs for disposal and potential loss of revenue. This

could be addressed by the introduction of a booking system and stricter controls on vehicles able to access the HRCs, which we have previously recommended.

- Increased numbers of people visiting the remaining HRCs will require additional staff to maintain operations which will result in associated costs.

- 4.2 Reducing the operational hours by closing the HRCs for one day a week would mitigate these risks, staggering the days the sites are closed so they are not on the same day so there is always a site open will also reduce the impact.
- 4.3 The results from the consultation also indicated that 61% of respondents would put their waste into their residual bin if their local HRC closed with the reduction in operating hours their local site will still be available 6 days a week, again reducing this risk.
- 4.4 The majority of site users (70%) are with a 5-20-minute drive of their local site, this could significantly increase if their local site was closed permanently, but the proposed reduction in operational hours and the fact that most residents use the sites monthly will mitigate this risk.

4.5 Booking System

A booking system would.

- Only allow a booking slot to those declaring a Shropshire postcode as a home address with the additional option of agree procedures and costs with neighbouring authorities for their residents who live close to the Shropshire border to potentially use the sites in the future
 - Allow the number of slots to be managed, helping to avoid queuing at busy times and to allow operatives to better engage with users to encourage even more recycling and lower contamination.
 - Limit the number of vans/trailers per hour and per day, which would mean more scrutiny of these loads.
 - Make it difficult for traders to access HRC sites.
 - Enable the sites to become more data driven.
- 4.6 The reduction in the operational hours of the sites from 7 to 6 days will mitigate any risk from the potential of any additional fly-tipping. The introduction of the booking system will prevent 'the man in the van' and SME using the sites to disposal of business/commercial waste. Any business producing waste has a duty of care to dispose of their waste responsibly and whilst there has been no evidence of an increase in fly-tipping when these systems have been introduced, we will monitor this situation and take appropriate enforcement action should any instances arise.

5. Financial Implications

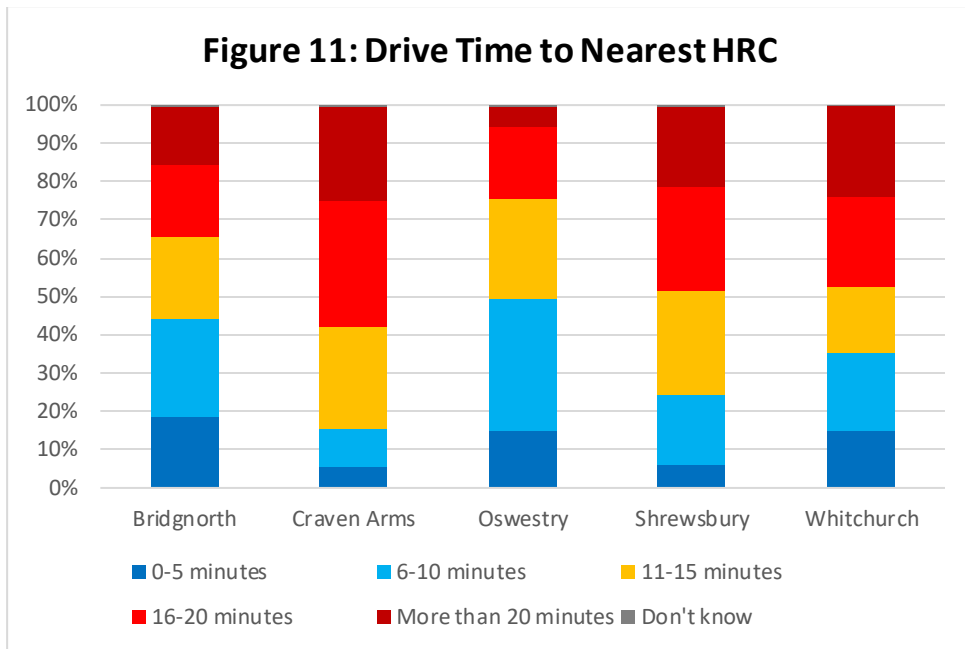
- 5.1. Gross annual running costs of all HRC sites has been assessed however, the original model detailed running costs of all the HRC and removing each site reduces the

modelled costs which when indexed using RPIX to today's values results in an additional one-off cost of up to £60,000.

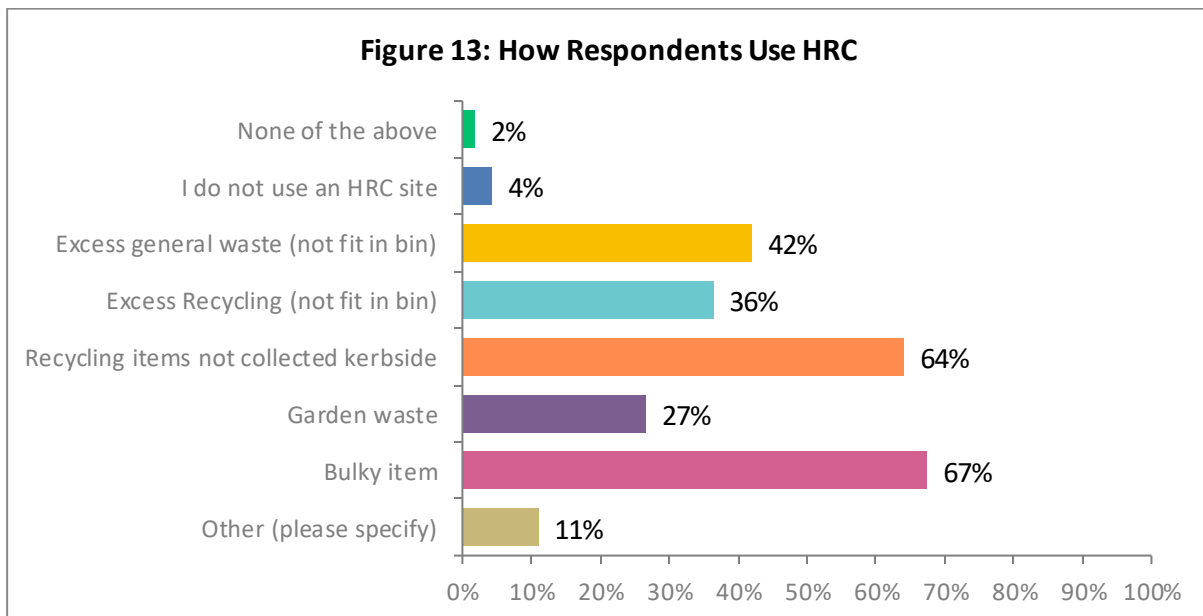
- 5.2. Net annual costs of each HRC site are not a calculated metric, and whilst the base case model does include costs and revenues for non-recyclable and recyclable waste, there are too many variables to ascertain what net cost changes will occur should some HRCs close permanently, so is not an option at this time
- 5.3. As the sites are not stand-alone sites but form part of a wider Intergrated Waste Management Facilities, the 'cost of closure' other than redundancy costs (estimated as part of the savings proposals) are also difficult to identify due to the uncertainty regarding the movement of waste.
- 5.4. It is not possible to accurately predict how changes to the HRC operations will affect the various other elements of the contract, and any restriction in HRC hours and/or closures will likely have a detrimental effect on some of the key annual KPIs.
- 5.5. Closing all five HRCs on a Wednesday and Thursday will deliver an annual saving of £152,289 which does not deliver the required £300,000 with a shortfall of £147,711.
- 5.6. The financial analysis provided by Veolia shows that the largest savings can be delivered by closing all the sites on a Sunday whilst still not delivering the full saving requirement the shortfall will only be £65,031 although Sunday is the most popular day with residents.
- 5.7. Closing the sites for one day a week either a Wednesday or Thursday will potentially deliver saving of circa £76,000 which is still a shortfall of £224,000.
- 5.8. The recommendation in the Chargeable Garden Waste Cabinet report also being considered at this meeting, is that the subscription fee should be £56. Whilst, this will contribute to the required revenue target, it is anticipated that participation will be higher than the 55% indicated in the consultation response and therefore, any additional revenue will contribute to any shortfall in savings that will not be achieved through closing the sites one day a week but this will need to be kept under review.
- 5.9. The introduction of HRC booking systems from recent reports in Kent, West Sussex, and West London all delivery efficiency savings of £200,000 per annum and it is therefore expected that this level of savings can be achieved in Shropshire.

6. Climate Change Appraisal

- 6.1 The drive time to all the sites varies with the average in Oswestry being up to 15 minutes and Craven Arms 20 minutes but the carbon impact will be affected by the actual number of site users, which there is presently no accurate record of.



6.2 The table below clear shows that most of the material taken to the HRC is for recycling offsetting the emissions from vehicles.



6.3 Recent modelling undertaken although not specific to the HRCs represented the ‘Life Cycle Assessment’ results, and so considered the impact of vehicles and infrastructure as a proportion of their use and their life. For example, the impact of the Energy from Waste plant (including construction burdens and operational impacts) was assessed over a 25-year life and annualised to reflect a year’s impact. As a waste management model, one of the key outcomes is the avoided impact of effective waste management, for example emissions displaced from extracting / processing of virgin materials versus secondary materials recovery for recycling. Similarly, energy recovery from waste can offset some of the emissions from fossil fuel-based alternatives.

6.4 All emissions relating to global warming impacts (e.g. methane, carbon dioxide, nitrous oxide) are converted to kg of CO₂ equivalent, over a 100-year timeframe. This is

standard practice for models considering carbon impacts of waste management processes.

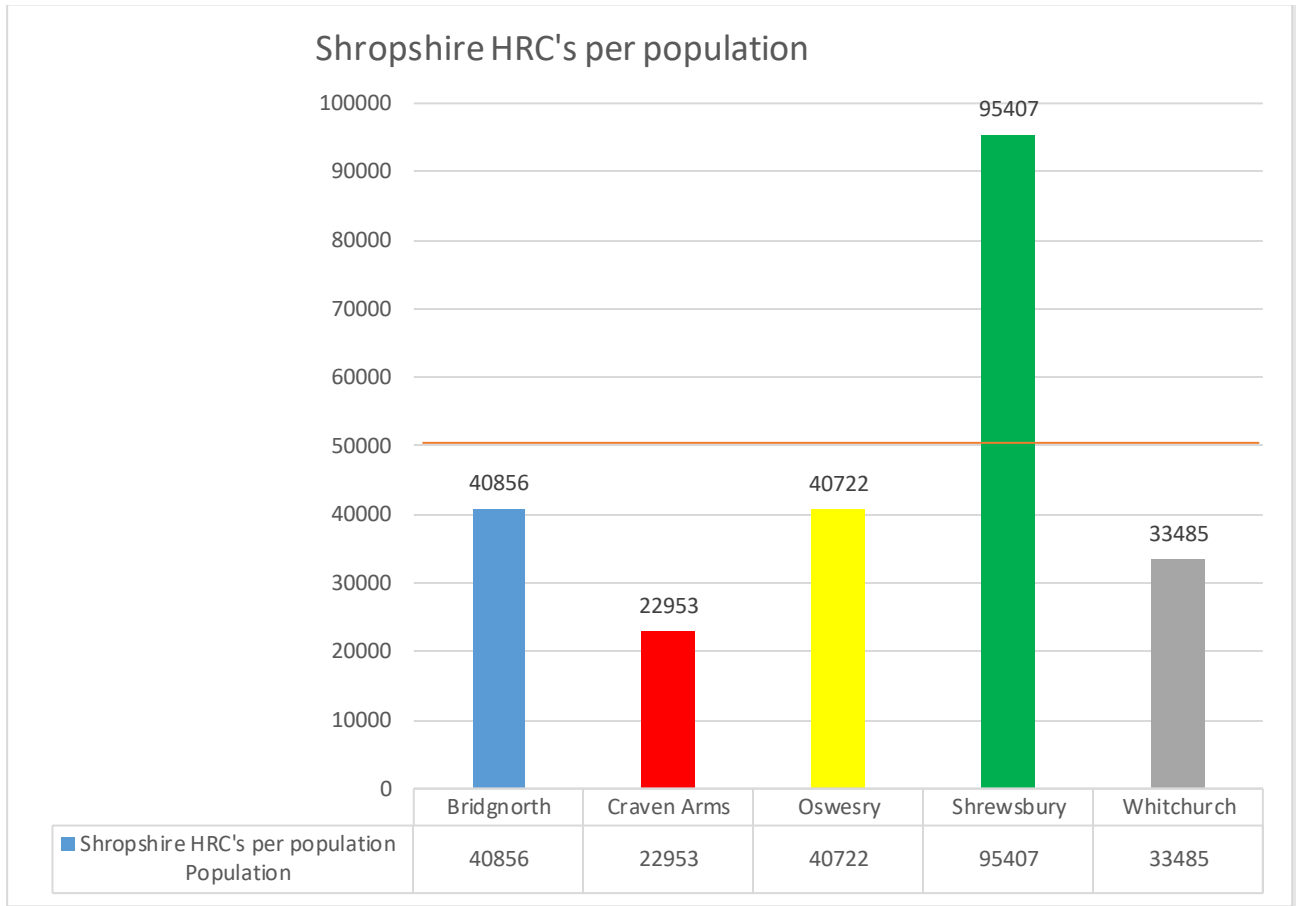
- 6.5 The overall result for Shropshire was a carbon impact of the whole waste services of – 2,273,226 Kg Co2 so an overall positive position due to carbon offsetting and mitigation.
- 6.6 Under the present system without the number of visitors being measured and a reduction in opening hours, it is foreseen that emissions from idling vehicles and the incorrect sorting of material due to members of the public rushing will potentially have a more than a negligible impact on emissions. However, the introduction of a booking system will help mitigate some of these impacts and ensure that any increases in carbon equivalent emissions are kept to a minimum.

7. Background

- 7.1 Under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, councils with responsibility for waste disposal must provide sites at which residents can deposit their household waste free of charge and that are reasonably accessible to residents. The law does not specify how many sites councils should provide and it is up to each authority to determine this and what is reasonably accessible based on local circumstances.
- 7.2 The present number of sites in Shropshire is a legacy of the former two-tier council system prior to Shropshire Council forming in 2009, where the five former district councils each had an HRC.
- 7.3 By law we must ensure that HRCs are reasonably accessible to residents at “all reasonable times (including at least one period on the Saturday or following day of each week except a week in which the Saturday is 25th December or 1st January)”. The law does not explain what ‘reasonable’ means; however, The Waste and Resources Action Partnership (WRAP) published an HWRC Guide in 2012, which identified guidance for the level of provision of HWRCs, these were:
- Maximum catchment for a large proportion of the population of 3-5 miles (7 miles in very rural areas)
 - Maximum driving times for the great majority of residents in good traffic conditions of twenty minutes (30 minutes in very rural areas)
 - Maximum number of inhabitants per HWRC of 120,000
 - Maximum number of households per HWRC of 50,000

Although not statutory guidance it does state that HRCs should ideally cover no more than 120,000 residents or 50,000 households.

Table 7.1 Population capture for each HRC

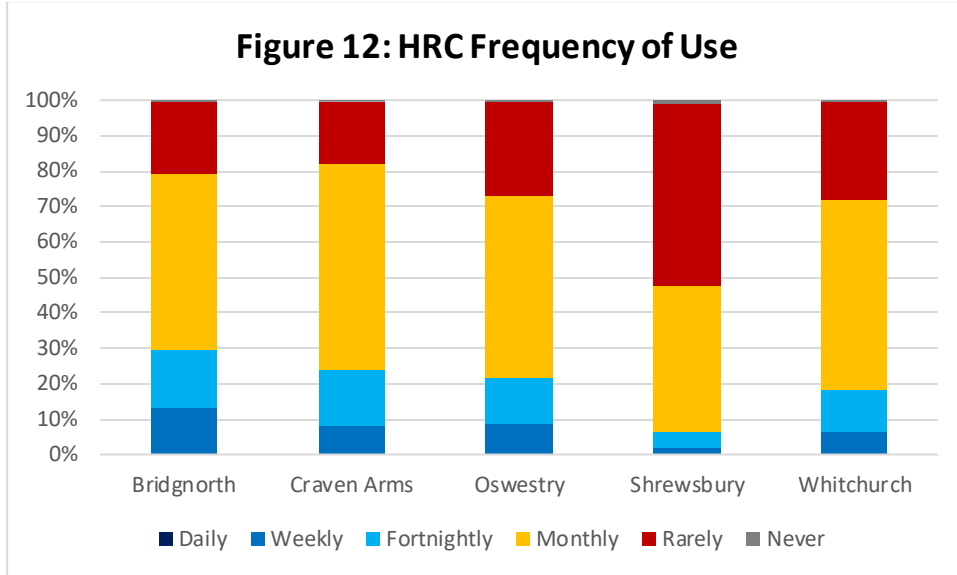


7.4 There are presently around 150,000 households in Shropshire it is therefore being consider reducing the number of sites from five to three with four of the five current sites within the 50,000-household threshold.

7.5 It must be recognised that the HRC sites are co-located with the Waste Transfer Stations (WTS) to form Integrated Waste Management Facilities (“IWMF”) and as such, many of the costs of the HRCs are shared with the WTS and the WTS will need to continue to operate.

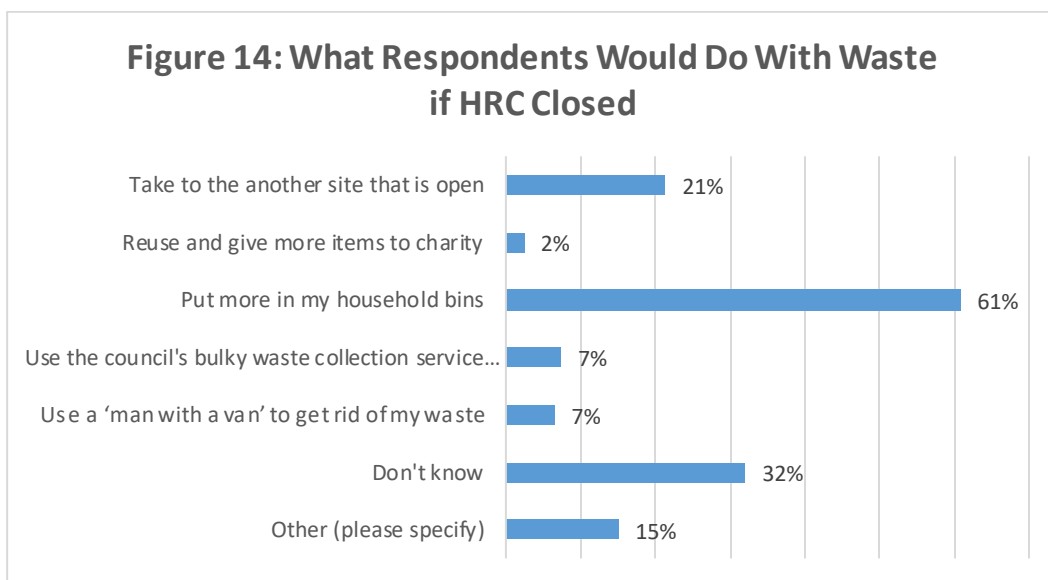
7.6 Information on site users, busy days etc.

7.6.1 Car counters were originally part of the Contract and were the property of Shropshire Council. However, as maintenance and running costs increased in previous years, the Council decided to axe these and so there is no accurate data for numbers of users etc. Informal observations from staff have confirmed that the busier days on all sites are Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holiday Mondays, followed by normal Mondays and Fridays. The quieter days of the week tend to be mid-week - Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. Figure 12 from the consultation results shows the frequency of use at all the sites with most visits on a monthly basis.



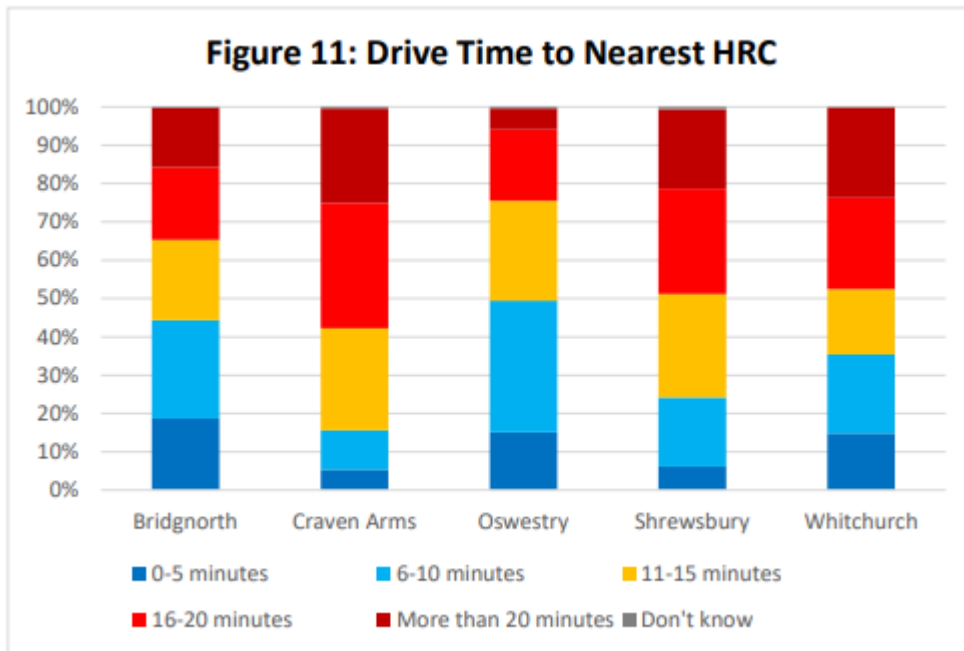
7.6.2 As closures will mean the remaining HRCs will be busier than before, members of the public are less likely to take their time to separate waste streams and maximise recycling resulting in additional costs for disposal and potential loss of revenue, although this could be addressed by the introduction of a booking system and stricter controls on vehicles able to access the HRCs.

7.6.3 Responses from the consultation in Figure 14 below clearly show that 61% of householder would put more waste in their general waste bin, this would result in a change of waste flows through the contract, impacting on revenue share from the Battlefield Energy Recovery Facility as well potential financial penalties.



7.7 Drive Times

The WRAP guidance states that maximum driving times for the great majority of residents in good traffic conditions of twenty minutes (30 minutes in very rural areas). Figure 11 from the consultation shows that on average 70% of residents are within 5–20-minute drive time of their local site.



7.8 Reduced Hours

7.8.1 All five of the HRCs are open seven days a week 9am-5pm and only closed on Christmas day and New Years Day there is therefore the option to reduce the operational opening times of all the sites to achieve to required savings.

7.8.2 Officers have reviewed several options with Veolia and these are as follows.

- All sites closed Wednesday & Thursday.
- Sites closed Wednesday & Thursday excluding Shrewsbury Battlefield.
- Close all sites on a Sunday.
- Close sites one day a week alternating around sites (different days so still provision across the county).

7.8.3 Preference for HRC opening days from the consultation are shown in Table 6 with Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday the least popular days.

Table 6. Ranking of Preferred Opening Days for HRCs	
Day	Average Ranking
Sunday	1
Saturday	2
Monday	3
Tuesday	4

7.9 Booking System

7.9.1 Part of the savings approved by the council includes the introduction of a booking system at the HRCs. Following the Covid outbreak of 2020, several councils introduced an online booking system for using HRCs. They have seen significant benefits of making this change and have continued with these systems subsequently. This only allow users to access the sites, once they have booked a time specific slot and confirmed various details about themselves and the waste that they want to dispose of.

A booking system would.

- Only allow a booking slot to those declaring a Shropshire postcode as a home address, thereby removing any waste from outside the county (although there could be an agreed protocol with neighbouring authorities). This will stop Shropshire residents funding a service that people from outside Shropshire can currently use but pay nothing towards its cost.
- Include a declaration that any waste is not trade or commercial waste.
- Allow the number of slots to be managed, helping to avoid queuing at busy times and to allow operatives to better engage with users to encourage even more recycling and lower contamination.
- Limit the number of vans/trailers per hour and per day, which would mean more scrutiny of these loads.
- Make it difficult for traders to access HRC sites. The sites are for use by householder, not commercial businesses, who should be using alternative arrangements to dispose of their business waste.
- Help to reduce queues.
- Enables the sites to become data driven, collecting information on usage, waste trends and behaviour.

7.9.2 The system is hosted online and requires a link from the council website for users to access. The user enters their address and vehicle details and chooses which site to visit. The system will give a range of timed slots that are available at that site and the user can select the most appropriate one from the same day to a week in advance. For users not able to access the internet, a call to the council call centre can enable a slot to be booked.

7.9.3 The HRC site will then be notified of all users expected and can authorise those that have booked as they arrive. Any user attempting to access the site without a booking will usually be refused entry as otherwise it could lead to delays for legitimate bookings. Publicity will be required in the lead up to the introduction to allow users to be aware of the change. At the same time, a review of acceptance criteria will be undertaken to remove access for vans and trailers, and this too will lead to further cost savings for the Council.

7.9.4 Evidence shows that householders rarely fly-tip; it tends to be rogue traders trying to avoid commercial charges. All householders have a duty of care to dispose of their

waste correctly. When they dispose of their waste, they must use a licensed waste carrier or take their waste to an HRC. They could be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) of up to £1000 if their waste ends up fly-tipped and can't show that they took reasonable steps to prevent it.

7.9.5 A booking system could also allow non-residents from neighbouring authorities who live close to the Shropshire border to use the sites under an agreed protocol.

7.9.6 Responses from the consultation were that many respondents objected to the introduction of a booking system because they feel it would overcomplicate things, make accessing the sites more difficult, cause issues with digital exclusion, or generally be unnecessary. However, as detailed there are significant benefits from introducing a booking system, these are simple to use and improve the overall customer experience and how this can improve the overall customer experience is demonstrated in a recent report from Kent County Council.

8. Additional Information

8.1 Consultation

8.1.1 Communications and Promotion

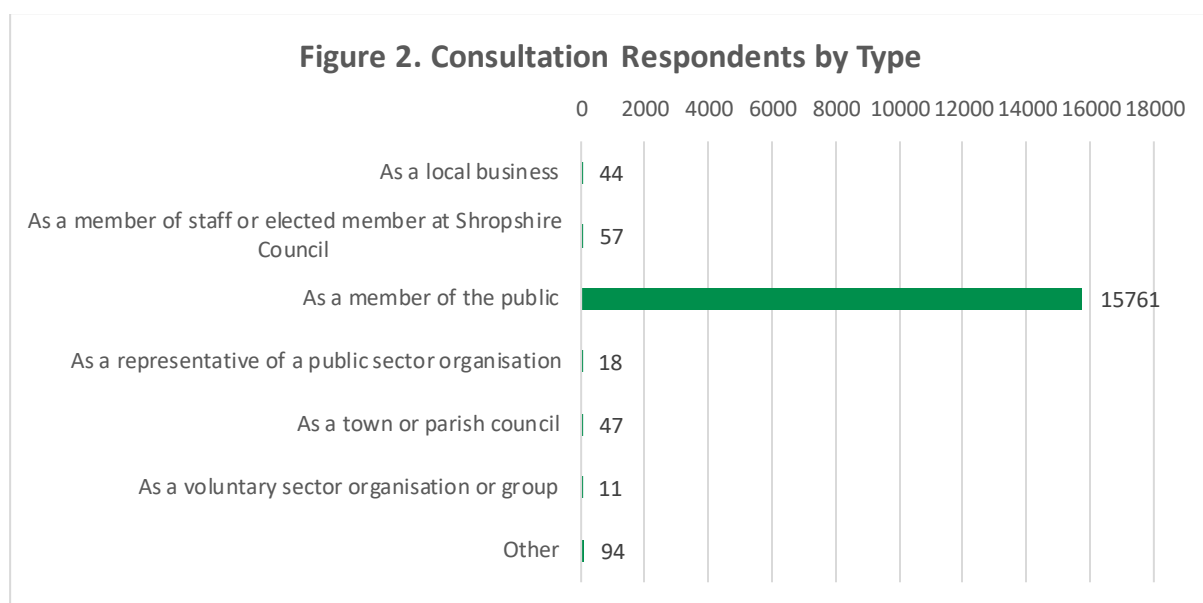
The consultation was promoted widely. An initial press release was published on the Shropshire Council newsroom website and all of its social media channels, including Facebook, X, Instagram, LinkedIn and NextDoor. Other local media outlets also publicised the consultation, including BBC Radio Shropshire and the Shropshire Star.

All Shropshire Councillors were involved in promoting the consultation in their areas, and posters were hung in Shropshire libraries, Shropshire Local, town and parish councils, and other public locations across the county. Finally, and most effectively for the purposes of response rates, several emails were sent to the 63,260 subscribers on the council's recycling/waste list.

8.1.2 Methods of Analysis

There were several opportunities throughout the survey for respondents to provide open-ended comments. With over 18,000 responses, and over a dozen questions that required qualitative analysis (in-depth reading and identification of themes within extensive comments), the Feedback and Insight Team determined that capacity required that a randomized sample of responses should be analysed in depth to provide the best analysis for the purposes of the report.

Therefore, a random sample was selected of 1,700 responses, and these were used to derive the themes and redacted quotes presented in this report. These responses were all read initially to identify common themes, and each response was tagged for the inclusion of these themes.



Tables are presented that represent the presence of the most common themes (these have been included within the main body of this report where relevant), and anonymised examples of these themes are provided where appropriate. Some of the comments will have multiple themes identified within them, and so the “count” in tables represents the number of occasions when a theme was referenced, rather than the total number of comments. The percentage represents the frequency of that theme’s reference among the total number of references.

This consultation report proceeds in seven sections:

- **Section 1: Background and Methods** (this section) provides an overview of Shropshire Council’s current budget situation that is the backdrop to the green waste proposals under consultation as well as a brief description of the methods employed in analysing the results of the consultation.
- **Section 2: Respondents** presents the number and types of responses to the consultation received from the public, as well as identifying demographic characteristics of respondents.
- **Section 3: Current HRC Use** details responses to questions around how residents currently use HRCs, including what they bring there and travel times.
- **Section 4: Introducing Changes to HRCs** details responses to questions around possible closures or reduced hours at HRCs and how this might impact residents.
- **Section 5: Booking System for HRCs** provides an overview of feedback on the possibility of introducing a booking system for HRC sites in the future.
- **Section 6: Additional Feedback** provides an in-depth analysis of open-ended comments from survey respondents on the proposals, as well as an analysis of all written feedback provided to the council through emails and other letters sent in response to the consultation. This section includes details of suggested alternatives to the proposals.
- **Section 7: Summary and Conclusion** highlights the report’s key findings.

9. Conclusions

- 9.1. The consultation and detailed discussions with Veolia were part of the process to provide recommendations on delivering the required savings and at no point had any decisions been made on site closure however, it has been clear from the consultation responses that the provision of the HRCs is important to our residents and communities.
- 9.2. An increase in the garden waste subscription charge in line with surrounding authorities will support the delivery of the required savings whilst reducing the impact on the HRCs especially permanent closure.
- 9.3. Whilst most respondents said that they would not support a booking system, it is clear from the evidence from other councils that these systems work and whilst there is often reluctance at the start, they become very popular. They not only reduce cost but also provide relevant data that can be used to make more informed decisions in the future.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

WRAP – Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) Guide
Kent County Council – Household Waste Recycling Centres Booking System

Local Members: All

Appendices

HRC Consultation Report
