

**ANGUS COUNCIL – 7 SEPTEMBER 2017**

**STRATEGIC REVIEW OF RECYCLING CENTRES**

**REPORT BY STRATEGIC DIRECTOR - PLACE**

**ABSTRACT**

**At the meeting of Angus Council on 29 June 2017, it was agreed to defer the closures and changes to Recycling Centres, and to establish a Member Officer Group to review the proposals as contained in Report 209/16 and as agreed and amended at the Communities Committee. This report advises members of the outcomes of the Member Officer Group.**

**1. RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Council:

- (i) Note the Health and Safety issues identified by the MOG and agree that the control measures identified in this report are implemented immediately;
- (ii) Note the Health and Safety and access issues with the current Kirriemuir and Forfar recycling centres and agree that these sites are not sustainable in the medium to long term and should be replaced with a modern centre that addresses the operational shortcomings of both sites and increases the range of materials that can be recycled;
- (iii) Agree that, in the light of the severe and enduring revenue budget challenges, the recommendations of the majority of the MOG at table one are accepted;
- (iv) Note that in discharging their duties, MOG members expressed their concern about the impact the pressures of budget reductions on frontline services in local communities and agree that if sustainable resources become available members reserve the right to review the recycling estate against the criteria of affordability, best value, sustainability, Health and Safety and overall Council priorities at a future date.

**2. ALIGNMENT TO THE ANGUS COMMUNITY PLAN/SINGLE OUTCOME AGREEMENT/COPORATE PLAN**

2.1 This report contributes to the following local outcome(s) contained within the Angus Community Plan and Single Outcome Agreement 2013-2016:

- Our communities are prosperous and fair;
- Our communities are safe and strong;
- Our communities are sustainable.

**3. BACKGROUND**

3.1 Report 209/16 presented to Communities Committee on 24 May 2016 recommended closures and changes to recycling centres within Angus. The report was subsequently amended by members, and the following changes were agreed:

- The closure of Monifieth Recycling Centre;
- The upgrading of Arbroath and Montrose Recycling Centres;
- That a new site be developed to serve Kirriemuir and Forfar;
- That opening hours would be reduced across all centres, with opening times varying between sites.

3.2 At the meeting of Angus Council on 29 June 2017, members agreed a motion to defer these changes pending review by a Member Officer Working Group. Officers were remitted to bring

forward a report on the conclusions of the MOG to the meeting of Angus Council on 7 September 2017.

- 3.3 Prior to the first meeting of the MOG on 13 July 2017, the following terms of reference were agreed:

The group reviews the decision made at the May 2016 Communities Committee (Report 209/16, as amended [http://www.angus.gov.uk/sites/angus-cms/files/2017-07/24\\_05\\_16.pdf](http://www.angus.gov.uk/sites/angus-cms/files/2017-07/24_05_16.pdf)) against the context of the Scrutiny and Audit Committee Report, Progress Towards Zero Waste (Report 328/14), and the context of the severe budget challenges facing the Council.

The MOG will be required to:

- (a) visit all recycling facilities within Angus and benchmark these against facilities in neighbouring Councils;
  - (b) review the costed evidence available to the Council;
  - (c) provide alternative proposals;
  - (d) ensure any alternative proposals retain significance on health and safety of employees and members of the public affected by our operations;
  - (e) ensure any alternative proposals are evaluated against the headings of service provision, affordability and best value and sustainability of implementation; and
  - (f) conduct the review at pace and reports back at the earliest opportunity after recess, or as determined by the MOG.
- 3.4 The MOG will develop a fully costed and risk assessed set of proposals for each centre and present these for the consideration of the Council, these options to be benchmarked against the principles in Item 2(d) above.

#### **4. FINANCIAL BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 Members are referred to Item 274/17 on the Agenda of this meeting wherein the Medium Term Budget Strategy detailed the financial issues facing the Council. The report includes a base projection for the 2018/19 funding gap of £15.6m which requires to be addressed. The Council has a change programme in place with a view to bridging this funding gap. Members will, however, be aware that there are areas of the Council's budget which have limited scope for savings due to being subject of long term contractual commitments e.g. PFI / PPP projects, loan charges, or government policy e.g. teacher numbers. In light of this circa one third of the Council's revenue budget has limited scope for savings and it is clear, therefore, that the Council will require to make many challenging decisions regarding front line service provision over the coming years to address the funding gap.

#### **5. MOG PROGRESS**

##### **5.1 Site Visits**

The MOG visited recycling centres in Perth and Kinross and Dundee City Council and MOG members wish to extend their thanks to Perth and Kinross and Dundee City Councils and in particular to the staff who guided members during their visits. The visits highlighted that a modern estate offers greater opportunities for recycling, easier access for customers (leading to improved Health and Safety) and higher efficiency as sites do not have to close to empty and replace skips. It was noted that these larger sites do not incur additional staff costs as the improved layout means self-service is the norm for customers.

Members also visited every Angus recycling centre and MOG members again extend their thanks to Angus Council staff who guided members during their visits and fed in their views to the MOG. During the visits Members noted the sites were smaller and more constrained with all but Arbroath and Montrose offering a reduced range of recycling opportunities. Members also noted that Forfar, Kirriemuir and Monifieth recycling centres all had to close for up to 30% of their available opening hours to service the site. A range of Health and Safety issues were

also noted and these are dealt with below. Members also noted the high levels of customer service and commend staff for the care and professionalism they display.

A key difference between the modern sites inspected in Perth and Kinross, Dundee City Council and at Montrose and Arbroath recycling centres were noted by members. Kirriemuir presents particular challenges. The site is accessed via a single lane road entered from the main route into Kirriemuir at Bellies Brae and when the site is closed, traffic can back up onto the main road. Members saw first-hand the fact that the site has to close when skips need changed over or when Council vehicles need access to empty other recycling containers.

In addition members noted that there had been a number of incidents where vehicles had collided with adjacent properties when attempting to negotiate the narrow entrance to the site, causing structural damage. Members also noted that Kirriemuir has a number of customers who access the site on foot, sharing the narrow access with vehicular traffic. Some members expressed concern that the layout of the site is congested and creates a bottleneck which potentially places pedestrians and customers at risk when vehicles are manoeuvring. Members also noticed a single skinned wall on the entrance and exit and that some 15 metres below this wall was an operational parks yard. A collision with this wall could result in masonry falling onto staff working in the yard below.

In relation to Forfar, members noted the restricted footprint of the existing site and the problems that creates for traffic flow. Staff informed members that traffic regularly backed onto the Queenswell Road and that owing to the layout and lack of space the site could close for up to 30% of operational time to change over skips and operate the minimiser (as explained by site staff during the member visits).

Monifieth presents similar issues to Kirriemuir and Forfar, restricted space, closures to change skips and in addition to this the challenges of low bridges and access needing to be taken over MOD land resulting in significant additional costs.

In relation to Brechin, Members noted that whilst there was restricted space which caused some traffic issues and limited recycling opportunities, the level differences on this site allowed for skip change over without closing the site.

Montrose and Arbroath have recently had their refurbishments completed and present no identified health and safety issues. The popularity of Montrose during the visit was noted and discussions took place about how traffic flow could be improved.

Members noted customer behaviour on the site. It was noted that customers brought green waste to the centres in a variety of containers from flexi buckets to heavy full wheelie bins. Members noted with concern the struggles as customers pushed and pulled bins up the ramps. Of particular concern was the manual handling issues that had to be overcome to haul green bins up and over the guard rails surrounding the skips. Members witnessed customers hanging over the edge of skips to recover bins and buckets. This was a matter of considerable concern for members and this is to be addressed by the MOG. Members also heard from site attendants the issues caused by trailers at the smaller, more congested sites. This will also be addressed by the MOG in this report.

Whilst Members were impressed by the proximity of the sites to local communities and the hard work of staff, the fact that many of the recycling sites in Angus are legacy sites from the County Council days means they are not designed for modern vehicles, current recycling regulations and are not capable of being brought up to modern standards due to space restrictions. The fact that a number of the sites require to close to service the skips means that up to 30% of operational availability (as explained to members by site staff) is lost, and this is a concern in terms of the efficient use of public resources. Members noted their affinity for their local services and desire to preserve that model but ultimately recognise the health and safety risks to the public and work force, their requirements to balance the budget and to show leadership in developing sustainable operational models of delivery and safe and sustainable centres for the public to use.

### 5.3 Evidence Review

The MOG has extensively reviewed the findings and financial implications associated with the decision of the Communities Committee (209/16) as amended. Members spent considerable time reviewing the figures and examining the detailed breakdown of costs, and reached a better understanding of both the costs and income associated with recycling centres. The MOG noted the accuracy of the figures presented to the Communities Committee. Members also noted the costs associated with disposal of materials and that all contracts have either recently been market tested or are about to be market tested. It was noted that income generated through the sale of materials collected at recycling centres was relatively small, however, greater segregation of recycling from residual waste resulted in significantly lower waste disposal costs.

### 5.4 Alternative Proposals

The MOG investigated a range of possible scenarios from reversal of proposals to variations of the options presented in report 209/16. The MOG examined the role and costs of capital and whole cost models. The latter issue has been referred to the Policy Budget Strategy Group (PBSG) for detailed examination in relation to the presentation of full project costs. The MOG looked at opening hours, the costs of running each site, the income of each site and the implications of any changes in line with the MOG remit.

After careful examination of the facts and figures and impacts of alternative proposals, and having regard to the site visits, the following conclusions have been reached relative to the decision made by the Communities Committee in May 2016 (Report 209/16 as amended refers):

### 5.5 MOG Proposals

<b>Arbroath</b>	Noted as the model site in Angus following recent refurbishment.  Conclusion: No change proposed.
<b>Montrose</b>	Redevelopment noted – Officers to look at traffic flow issues.  Conclusion: No change proposed
<b>Brechin</b>	Traffic issues noted.  Conclusion: No change proposed.
<b>Kirriemuir</b>	Members noted the professional concerns regarding Health and Safety (H&S) issues with the Kirriemuir site. Independent H&S review to be commissioned, but long term future of the site is not secure with closures to service the site highlighting the inefficiency of the operational model.  Conclusion: No change proposed.  MOG instruct officers to investigate alternative uses for the site and that discussions are held with the local community regarding the future of the site.
<b>Forfar</b>	Traffic problems and site layout issues noted. Closures to service the site highlighting the inefficiency of the operational model. Alternative site needed and alternative uses sought for the existing site.  Conclusion: No change proposed.  MOG instruct officers to investigate site uses that create employment and

	economic growth within Angus.
<b>Monifieth</b>	Traffic problems and site layout noted. Closures to service the site highlighting the inefficiency of the operational model. Additional costs associated with MOD access and access issues with the low height bridges noted. Site closure proposed.  Conclusion: No change proposed.  MOG instruct officers to investigate alternative uses for the site and that discussions are held with the local community regarding the future of the site.
<b>Carnoustie</b>	No changes but layout issues noted and possible redevelopment opportunities subject to the availability of capital funding for recycling or alternative uses.  Conclusion: No change proposed.

In summary, whilst officers have been instructed to look at possible alternative uses for a number of sites, there are no changes proposed to the outcome and decision from that reached at the Communities Committee on 24 May 2016 (Report 209/16 as amended refers).

With the exception of the Kirriemuir and Forfar sites, it is anticipated implementation of the recycling centre changes per that decision will take place from week commencing 30 October 2017.

In respect of the Kirriemuir and Forfar changes, it will not be possible to implement these this financial year as proposals for an alternative site require to be more fully worked up and a further report to members will be required in this regard.

## 5.6 **Benchmarking the Proposals**

Council has requested that the MOG ensure any alternative proposals deliver long term sustainability in terms of health and safety, service provision, affordability and best value. The benchmark items must also be reviewed within the context of the reducing budgets local government is facing.

The proposals of the MOG have been tested against the above requirements and have been found to effectively manage health and safety risks, remove inefficiency, in the form of site closure to change skips, and is both affordable and sustainable within the budgets available at the time of the MOG's deliberations.

In addition the MOG makes the following recommendations in relation to Health and Safety.

- (a) The emptying of wheeled bins into recycling skips to be stopped immediately and staff instructed to police the enforcement of this;
- (b) Customers will no longer be able to walk into recycling centres owing to the risks of mixing with traffic
- (c) A paper on the use of trailers at recycling centres to be brought forward.

## 6 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 There are no direct financial implications created by the recommendations in this report in respect of the recycling centre changes per the previous decision of the Communities Committee of 24 May 2016.

Implementation of most of the agreed changes from week beginning 30 October 2017 results in a deferral period of 14 weeks from the original planned implementation date of 24 July 2017. It is estimated that this implementation date will incur additional overall revenue costs of

approximately £49,000 in the current financial year. This is an additional £16,000 to that noted in the motion to Council on 29 June 2017 that agreed the MOG review of this area.

There is no specific budget provision for these overall additional costs and as per the motion to Council on 29 June 2017, these will need to be funded from the Council's uncommitted reserves which stood at £334,000 at 31 March 2017. This will reduce the Council's uncommitted reserves to £285,000.

In respect of the new recycling centre to serve Forfar and Kirriemuir, it was always anticipated that this would not be delivered in the current financial year, allowing for identification of a site, design of the centre, procurement of the works and actual construction. The revenue costs to support the transition of approximately £50,000 in 2017/18 will be met from resources carried forward from 2016/17. Funding to support the transition in 2018/19 will be considered as part of the 2018/19 budget setting process.

Should alternative proposals be made these will need to be fully funded and be sustainable in terms of the impact on budgets, health and safety and improvements to customer experience.

## **7. CONSULTATION**

The Strategic Director – People, Head of Corporate Improvement & Finance and Head of Legal & Democratic Services have been consulted on the terms of this report.

**NOTE:** No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to a material extent in preparing the above Report.

**Author:** Alan McKeown, Strategic Director Place  
**E-mail:** [CommunitiesBusinessSupport@angus.gov.uk](mailto:CommunitiesBusinessSupport@angus.gov.uk)