

**Forest Heath District Council (FHDC)
St Edmundsbury Borough Council (SEBC)**

**WEST SUFFOLK WASTE
AND STREET SCENE
SERVICES JOINT
COMMITTEE**

17 JUNE 2011

REPORT NO

C24

**Report of the Strategic Director (Services) (FHDC)
and the Corporate Director (Economy & Environment)
(SEBC)**

FIRES AT LACKFORD AND HAVERHILL TRANSFER STATIONS – UPDATE

Synopsis:

On the evening of Monday 2 May 2011 a fire broke out in the bailing shed at Lackford Transfer Station. The result of this fire is that the shed has been destroyed and transfer arrangements for blue bin dry recyclables have temporarily been moved to Red Lodge. On the afternoon of Sunday 5 June 2011 a fire broke out in the bailing shed at Haverhill Transfer Station. The result of this fire is that the shed has suffered some damage and transfer arrangements for black bin residual waste have temporarily moved to Red Lodge. This report provides the latest information on these fires and the implications going forward.

1. Background – Lackford Fire

- 1.1 FHDC and SEBC tip dry recyclable (blue bin) material at the Lackford transfer station operated by Viridor Waste Management Ltd, prior to onward bulking and transfer to the Material Recycling Facility (MRF) at Gt Blakenham for sorting. It is only this blue bin material that is now taken to the transfer station by the two Councils since the contract for disposing of residual (black bin) waste was changed and moved to Waste Recycling Group (WRG) in the Summer of 2010. Brown bin organic waste is taken to a different part of the Lackford site for composting, which is some distance from where the fire took place and remains fully operational. The last delivery of blue bin waste was made by FHDC and SEBC on Saturday 30 April 2011.
- 1.2 The fire started on the evening of Monday 2 May 2011 (a Bank Holiday). Review of the CCTV pictures from within the bailing shed indicates that at 9 pm everything was fine but by 2am on Tuesday morning the entire contents of the shed were well alight. The shed is split into two halves with around 40 tonnes of our recyclable materials on one side and 100 tonnes of residual waste (from others) on the other. It would seem that the fire started on the recyclable side of the shed and it is probable that it was started with a fault either with one of the vehicles parked inside the shed or an adjacent electrical panel, which were both in the vicinity of where the fire started

- 1.3 The Fire Service was called when the first employee arrived for work on the Tuesday morning at around 6.00 am and they arrived some 20 minutes later. Once the Fire Service was satisfied that nobody was at risk and there was no danger to other property they decided not to tackle the blaze which is understood to be standard practice. Wind direction and weather conditions were also monitored and these were favourable, blowing away from Lackford and Flempton villages. Viridor personnel remained on site 24 hours a day watching the fire as instructed by the Fire Service who continued to monitor the site situation in the days following the fire. Had the wind direction or any other circumstances changed then the Fire Service may have taken a different course of action.
- 1.4 A small bowser was used to dampen down the fire with a relatively modest amount of water. Yard water goes to a soak-away and the drain to this was blocked to prevent contaminated water going into the ground. This is part of the site design and standard practice in such situations. The residual water was collected from a containment area at the edge of the site where it had formed a pond and was tankered away.
- 1.5 Remaining burnt material was removed from site the following week allowing a full structural survey to take place. The full report of this survey is awaited but an initial look at the building reveals that all the cladding and doors are damaged beyond repair. 10 columns appear to be buckled and the concrete push walls (against which waste is banked) are probably damaged too. It is unclear what the extent of the damage is to the concrete slab at this time.
- 1.6 On the morning of the fire temporary arrangements were quickly made to take blue bin waste and tip it at the WRG facility at Red Lodge. This is the same location used for tipping some of our residual (black bin) waste. This current temporary arrangement, agreed between Viridor and WRG will continue for some time. Operationally this arrangement has neutral impact to FHDC but it does impact on SEBC during blue bin collection week in Haverhill and rural areas to the south of the Borough. This is due to travel distances to Red Lodge being further than those to Lackford. However, Viridor have recently confirmed that blue bin waste from the south of the SEBC area can be taken to WRG's facility in Haverhill once it reopens. This is an improvement to the status quo for SEBC.
- 1.7 Subject to planning and permit approvals, Viridor are working to make a temporary tipping facility available at Lackford for blue bin waste. Viridor will invite our operational teams to Lackford before the temporary area for dry recyclables is ready to confirm site safety rules and safe working procedures. The opening of this temporary facility will coincide with the new weighbridge coming into operation which is adjacent to the transfer station. This will be an improvement that should reduce time in looping round to the current weighbridge location at Lackford.
- 1.8 In the longer term Viridor are looking to re-build the Lackford facility. This would be to a similar design as before. The decision to rebuild will be taken with consideration to the relatively short term left on the current contract, which is due to expire in 2014. If the decision is taken to rebuild the facility, it would be ready by Spring 2012 subject to planning and permit.

Background – Haverhill Fire

- 1.9 Crews based at SEBC's Haverhill Depot tip residual (black bin) material at the Haverhill transfer station operated by Waste Recycling Group (WRG), prior to onward bulking and transfer for disposal. We are directed to dispose of residual waste at this facility through a contract that Suffolk County Council has with WRG. The WRG Haverhill facility accepts waste from other Councils including Braintree and Uttlesford.
- 1.10 The Fire Service was called to the scene after smoke was seen coming from the building on the afternoon of Sunday 5 June 2011. After arriving at the site they made contact with WRG and gained entry to the building to tackle the fire which was burning in a pile of residual waste. Fire crews remained on-site whilst waste was removed from the shed and doused down before being taken away for disposal.
- 1.11 At the time of writing (8 June 2011) we have not been advised of any known cause for the fire.
- 1.12 From Monday 6 June 2011 Haverhill based crews have been collecting residual waste and taking it to WRG's Red Lodge Transfer Station. The increased distance is resulting in higher fuel use and longer working hours (overtime) which is being monitored and recorded.
- 1.13 The fire was extinguished within 24 hours and it is understood that most of the building structure is sound with a specific area having received more damage. At the time of writing we are advised that the Haverhill Transfer Station should reopen on 9 June 2011 after which normal services can be resumed.

2. Finance/Budget/Resource Implications

There is no significant financial impact to FHDC but there has been an impact in terms of additional mileage (fuel) and overtime payments affecting Haverhill based crews on blue bin weeks (Lackford) and latterly black bin weeks (Haverhill). These should be offset by the more favourable situation of tipping blue bin waste at WRG in Haverhill once this transfer station reopens.

3. Environmental Impact and Sustainability

The potential environmental impact of the fire was closely managed by Suffolk Fire Service and Viridor Waste Management at the time and during the aftermath.

4. Policy Compliance

No impact.

5. **Performance Management Implications**

No impact.

6. **Legal Implications**

No impact.

7. **Human Rights Act and Diversity Implications**

No impact.

8. **Crosscutting Implications**

We continue to work closely with colleagues at the Suffolk Recycling Consortium, Suffolk County Council and the management at Viridor and WRG in reaching a satisfactory resolution to these incidents.

9. **Risk Assessment**

Any risks associated with using new facilities at WRG and Lackford will be carefully addressed.

10. **Council Priorities**

Forest Heath

Street scene and environment

St Edmundsbury

Raise standards and corporate efficiency;
Secure a sustainable and attractive environment

11. **Recommendation:**

Members of the Joint Committee are recommended to note this report.

Documents Attached

None

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Strategic Director (Services)

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

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