

(/)

[Resident \(/?aud=resident\)](#)

[Business \(/?aud=business\)](#)

[Visitor \(/?aud=visitor\)](#)

[Councils \(/?aud=council\)](#)

[Home \(/\)](#)

[News \(/news/\)](#)

Next step for potential shared operational hub

## Next step for potential shared operational hub

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Cabinet members in West Suffolk are being asked to agree to take the next step in the process which could see three councils' recycling, waste transfer and depot operations all working from one site at Hollow Road Farm on the outskirts of Bury St Edmunds.



The proposal is being made as part of the development of a business case which will look at the financial and other benefits of the West Suffolk councils – Forest Heath District and St Edmundsbury Borough – working with Suffolk County Council on a new West Suffolk Operational Hub. The innovative approach includes inviting other public sector organisations that have fleets of vehicles, with all the associated costs such as maintenance and fuel, to join the partnership and make it even more cost effective.

Creating the shared operational hub would also free up space next to West Suffolk House in Bury for the second phase of the Public Service Village. This would look to attract more partner organisations to the Western Way site, making it easier for people to access a range of public services in one visit.

Leader of St Edmundsbury Borough Council, Cllr John Griffiths, said: "It's early days yet but the work so far shows there would be tremendous benefits for West Suffolk taxpayers through creating a single hub for all our vehicle and other operations, especially if we can bring more partners on board as well. In West Suffolk we have a strong, and very successful, track record of making large-scale savings from sharing services with other organisations and I am confident that together we can make a success of this new venture."

Cllr James Waters, Forest Heath District Council Leader, said: "Not only will this cut costs by bringing so many services together, it will also create a better public recycling centre, better facilities for maintenance and better road access for our heavy vehicles. Just as importantly, it will give us an opportunity to chase other business and use the income from that to cut our overheads even further. The national 'One Public Estate' programme is all about pulling the public sector together – our pioneering project shows we're absolutely on that page."

If the West Suffolk councils' Cabinets agree to proceed further, the project will move on to the pre-planning stage which will include a month of consultation before a planning application is submitted to St Edmundsbury Borough Council as the local planning authority. The consultation would start on 9 March and include an exhibition and drop-in session for people to ask questions. The update on progress goes to St Edmundsbury's Cabinet on 10 February and a week later at Forest Heath. The county council's Cabinet will consider it on 24 February.

The update says the business case will assume the closure of the Bury St Edmunds and Mildenhall depots (the St Edmundsbury depot in Haverhill would remain in operation). These, along with the household waste recycling centre on Rougham Hill, would move to the Hollow Road Farm site where a new Suffolk County Council waste transfer station would also be built.

There are still a number of steps to be taken before a final decision is made but if all the stages are approved the new site could be open in late 2016/early 2017. Benefits of moving to a single site include:

- reduced taxpayers' cost by bringing waste operations together, close to the highest West Suffolk population concentration;
- reduced overall costs of running and maintaining buildings;
- sites released for redevelopment and new uses;
- creation of a modern facility, fit for operational requirements and with capacity to respond to population and business growth;
- a new household waste recycling centre where people do not have to climb stairs to dispose of their waste and recycling;
- a new vehicle maintenance workshop not only for council vehicles but for other operators as well;
- efficiencies in household waste collection by bringing waste collection vehicles to the same location;
- more capacity to collect business waste, again by bringing vehicles to the same location.

More details are available on [www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/secabinetreports](http://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/secabinetreports)  
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## **In this section**

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[News last year \(/news/lastyear.cfm\)](/news/lastyear.cfm)

[Press releases \(/news/press-release.cfm\)](/news/press-release.cfm)

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