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Councillors to consider further consultation on West Suffolk Operational Hub

02 Sep 2015

Councillors are being asked to approve a second round of consultation which would give residents across West Suffolk the opportunity to give their views about proposals for a shared waste transfer station, vehicle depot and household waste recycling site.

The West Suffolk Operational Hub is a project involving Forest Heath District Council, Suffolk County Council and St Edmundsbury Borough Council as development partners.

St Edmundsbury's Cabinet will next week consider a report which outlines plans for the second pre-application consultation on the West Suffolk Operational Hub, following concerns raised by those who live nearest to the preferred site for the facility at Hollow Road Farm, Bury St Edmunds.

The second pre-application consultation stage will ask communities to put forward their views on the concept of the Operational Hub and the preferred site at Hollow Road Farm, which can then be taken into account before any formal planning application is made (which would also include further consultation).

Previous consultation in March highlighted a number of environmental concerns, including highways and traffic impact, noise, odour, landscape and visual impact. There were also queries about why Hollow Road Farm was selected, the combination of activities on site and planning policy.

The next consultation would provide the public with a range of technical documents including a sustainability appraisal, the councils' case for locating services together at an operational hub, the site selection criteria and the process used to review potential sites. People can scrutinise this information and put forward suggestions for alternative sites.

Cllr Peter Stevens said: "I fully understand why people living near Hollow Road Farm would have concerns about our proposals and I hope that this further consultation will help to show the detailed work that has been carried out which led to the site being identified as the preferred option. We still have some way to go so have not yet set a date for any planning application as that would not be submitted until we have had an opportunity to consider carefully any credible alternatives that may be submitted to us. St Edmundsbury Cabinet members will also be asked to recommend further investment of £108,000 to progress the project. Forest Heath Cabinet members will consider the same report on 15 September and then it will go for a final decision to St Edmundsbury Council meeting on 22 September and Forest Heath Council on 14 October.

The West Suffolk Operational Hub is a joint Forest Heath, Suffolk County and St Edmundsbury Borough councils' project to deliver a:

waste transfer station (where waste from refuse freighters collected from across West Suffolk is delivered, transferred into larger vehicles and taken to the Energy from Waste facility in Great Blakenham);

vehicle depot (parking and maintenance facilities for the councils' vehicle fleets);

Household Waste Recycling Centre.

More background details are in these papers (available on the website: www.westsuffolk.gov.uk) Forest Heath: CAB/FH/15/001 dated 17 February 2015 and St Edmundsbury: CAB/SE/15/015 dated 10 February 2015.

The reports include the key drivers and benefits of the hub, including:

1. the changing nature of waste collection and disposal in Suffolk;
2. relocating St Edmundsbury's ageing fleet depot from Western Way in Bury and enabling development on that site;
3. relocating Forest Heath's Mildenhall depot and enabling that facility to be put to alternative commercial use;
4. co-locating with Suffolk County Council's waste transfer station and Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) increasing operational efficiencies;
5. meeting the objectives of the Government's 'One Public Estate Programme';
6. reducing fleet mileage and increasing capacity; and
7. reducing running costs through using modern, efficient facilities on a combined site.

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