

CABINET RESPONSE TO ENVIRONMENT & TRANSPORT SELECT COMMITTEE

UPDATE ON COMMUNITY RECYCLING CENTRE PERFORMANCE REPORT

I want to personally thank Steve Renshaw, members of the select committee and the waste management team for this helpful and informative report.

The community recycling centres are highly valued by our residents and over the past five years, the service provided at these sites has gone from strength to strength. We are undertaking an ambitious refurbishment programme as part of our PFI contract with SITA Surrey. Five sites have already been redeveloped into modern split-level recycling centres and another two redevelopment projects are currently underway. We have also worked extensively with our contractor SITA Surrey to improve levels of customer service, including opportunities to recycle many more materials.

The results have been impressive. The proportion of waste that is recycled at our sites has increased from a level of 45% in 2007/8 to over 70% today and we will continue to push levels of recycling and recovery still further.

Feedback from site users has been very positive and the council has recently received an award from the Reigate Society for the newly redeveloped Earlswood Community Recycling Centre.

We must not however be complacent. Increasing the amount of waste that we reuse, recycle or recover value from will help us to reduce our reliance on landfill, which is becoming increasingly expensive and is damaging to the environment.

I am pleased that the select committee has recognised the range of initiatives that are currently being undertaken to improve the service to our customers and divert more waste from landfill and has provided confidence for these to continue.

The additional staffing trial has shown that we can extract more recycling at little or no cost. There is also the added benefit of improved customer service as a result of having more staff to assist members of the public using the sites.

Given the uptake of the extended opening hours trial last year, I agree with the select Committee that the cost of continuing with the trial cannot be justified. Particularly given the current economic climate. However, in this respect, I would note that, whilst other authorities are closing sites, our fifteen community recycling centres remain open 363 days each year.

Overall, I strongly support the recommendations of the Select Committee.

Ian Lake
Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment
31 January 2012