

OUR REF: WK181254

Date: 8 December 2023

Councillor Adrian Delaney
Via Email

Dear Councillor Delaney

Petition No: 2692 – Protect Cofton Park & Nursery

With reference to the above petition relating to the Lifford Lane Household Recycling Centre (HRC) and protecting Cofton Park & Nursery which was presented to the Council on 7th November 2023.

We know it is facility that is hugely valued by the communities of south Birmingham who use the site as a location to responsibly dispose of recyclable materials and other waste. This is exactly why we want to upgrade the venue. We are fully committed to ensuring that we provide modern, effective and efficient services for the people of Birmingham. It's also important that our hardworking staff that serve our citizens have facilities that are modern, effective and efficient.

Lifford Lane is in need of works and its redevelopment was detailed in a waste contract report that went to the council's Cabinet in April and June of this year. We subsequently secured planning consent for a scheme. It was made clear in the days following the planning approval that there would be full engagement with all relevant stakeholders before work commenced, and that the work would not begin until well into 2024 at the very earliest.

The recent Section 114 announcement (which restricts all but non-essential council spend) means we are taking stock of this programme, a point that has been confirmed in several public meetings, including the city council meeting at which this petition was submitted. That period of review and reflection will inform subsequent timescales.

One point of understandable concern is rumours regarding contingency sites whilst Lifford Lane is out of use. The facts are that when the waste contract went to the council's Cabinet, it was made clear that there would be a contingency HRC to mitigate the closure of Lifford Lane.

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The planning committee papers from July of this year (when the scheme was given planning consent) were based on documentation from the start of 2023, which was before the personal intervention of the Cabinet Member for Environment who insisted that a contingency would be required.

Council officers have been working hard to look at all potential options for a temporary facility.

Nothing has been ruled in or out – because it would be irresponsible to do that until all factors and issues have been considered.

Any site chosen for an alternative would be subject to the usual range of permissions, including – where relevant – planning and from organisations such as the Environment Agency.

I must be clear that this isn't something that will be done without all relevant checks and balances and we will of course have to give full consideration to any guidance about the viability of any contingency facility that we receive from our team of Commissioners, recently appointed by the Government to help us to address the council's financial challenge amongst other things.

As per the clearly stated vision of the Commissioners, any decisions will be based on ensuring that best value is delivered. This will mean that citizens receive the best possible standard of core services that they rightly expect the council to deliver.

Finally, I know there has also been some significant misinformation put out via the press and social media about traffic that may be caused by a temporary HRC facility. Those spreading concern via their narrative have ignored or overlooked the fact we have a booking system in place at the city's HRCs – which provides certainty of access and has eradicated the nightmare of queues that affected sites in the past, particularly at Lifford.

As and when we have more details on the Lifford Lane HRC project, they will be communicated widely.

Yours sincerely



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