

To all Herts local papers 6 Feb 2012

I would need a thousand words to properly answer Cllr Derrick Ashley's letter about the county council's expensive waste 'solution' but briefly: -

Derrick uses selective figures - "cost per tonne" for landfill (£100), but "savings over 25 years" for the proposed Hatfield incinerator.

So, how much per tonne, Mr Ashley, will the new incinerator charge? (I calculate about £150pt)?

His "£544m more to keep using landfill" is wrong; that came from the 2008/9 business case and was the difference between the cost of carrying on as we are against getting an incinerator (including £215m PFI grant of taxpayer money). How they calculated the cost of using landfill until 2041 is commercially confidential but they were predicting municipal waste would grow to over 700,000t pa and we would only reach 50% recycling.

By 2011 HCC had new projections for waste growth, down to 540,000t pa, and better recycling predictions, 57% by 2030, so they adjusted the contract with Veolia – that's where the "extra savings" of £779m (not £700m as quoted) comes from – reduced waste!

But they forgot this reduction in their landfill calculation - the total cost of landfill until 2041 should also have been reduced before calculating any 'savings'.

Also in 2008/9 they had to allow for future landfill penalties - an extra £150 pt if you send more than an allowed amount. HCC would potentially send about 4 million tonnes over the allowance over the period – the figure they allowed for this is secret. In 2011 Defra scrapped that scheme (from 2013 onwards). So – less waste and no penalties but still the 2011 landfill estimate remains stuck at the 2008 figure in the comparisons they make. No wonder they think they will save so much.

My calculations do include these changes – I get landfill being between £264m and £481m cheaper than the incinerator. But I also know that recycling is miles cheaper than either and I certainly don't advocate landfill as a good solution.

A good example for Herts – Surrey County Council ditched their PFI incinerator project in 2009, saved large amounts of money and have a recycling target of 70% by 2013/14. I will put some links on HertsWOW website.

I am sure HCC won't refuse objections to their plan if they are a little late.

Mick Bee, Letchworth
Member of HertsWithOutWaste.