

Date: Thu, 10 Mar 2016 21:30:50 +0100

To: Councillor Richard Thake, Hertfordshire CC's Executive Member for Community Safety & Waste Management
Copied f.y.i. to: Elaine Shell, Democratic Services Manager and Kathryn Pettitt, Chief Legal Officer
also f.y.i. to: Councillor Terry Hone, HCC officers Simon Aries & Matt King; HWP Co-ordinator Duncan Jones
From: Dr John Webb, 1 Meadow Way, Letchworth Garden City, Hertfordshire, SG6 3JB
On behalf of: Herts. WithOut Waste, a community group that advocates ways ahead toward a circular economy

Dear Richard,

Before the Cabinet committee's meeting on Monday 14th March, we wish to call in question your intended recommendation to Cabinet, as outlined at the end of the CS&WM Cabinet Panel on 4th March.

Caveat: We are not challenging the propriety of the decision-making on legal grounds, in terms of compliance with the Council's rules. Indeed we applaud your vigilance as Chairman of the Cabinet Panel in ensuring an open and unconstrained debate in Part 1 of the meeting and your consultations with the Chief Legal Officer whenever specific points of procedure arose.

In summary: We have no confidence that a decision of such far reaching consequences is being made with the consideration that is due to it.

- 1 We note that the RPP proposal cuts across a range of the Council's own policies even though "The Executive cannot take decisions which are out of line with the overall policies or budget agreed by the full Council." (HCC Constitution, para. 1.2) Here we will focus on our concerns about the pace of the decision-making process, in this case with a £1.1bn (indicative service cost to HCC) and a 40 year lifetime for the facility.
- 2 If a new incinerator plant were to be built, it would be in operation toward full capacity until the 2060s, followed by decommissioning, even were the Council's use of it to fall away over those decades; which we strongly believe it would if the most sustainable policies were pursued.
- 3 We believe that (despite current precautions) the matter of Veolia's RPP is being handled with undue haste, in just a couple of weeks in early March 2016.
- 4 As a step in that process, the Cabinet Panel's meeting was unsatisfactory in advising you as the Executive Member. Since its

function is only advisory, we consider that you have a range of options in making a recommendation to Cabinet.

- 5 We trust that you will make it clear to Cabinet members that although the vote was split evenly, the majority of those who opposed the RPP were well informed and presented well thought out arguments whereas amongst those who spoke against there were misunderstandings about the monitoring of emissions and the quality of the bottom ash.
- 6 We consider that there is an issue of fairness which arose from a panel member's absence at short notice due to illness when no substitution was practicable. Perhaps it would help to consider what the absent member might have advised, had they been at the session.
- 7 We accept that your recommendation to Cabinet cannot ensure a particular outcome, yet as you are the relevant Executive Member your opinion must carry considerable weight in arriving at its decision on this matter.
- 8 Whereas the Cabinet Panel focussed upon the Waste Disposal Authority's recommendation for a disposal service under the RPP, we hope that the Cabinet committee will consider the full magnitude and duration of that proposal in comparison with more sustainable alternatives (say for 5 to 15 years at a stretch) and taking time to explore those alternatives in similar depth to the Officers' Report on the RPP.
- 9 In particular, we ask you to remind the Cabinet of the immense operational value of the Hertfordshire Waste Partnership and to allow time for a unitary mode of Waste Management to emerge across the County.
- 10 We urge that on a precautionary basis it would be safer in the Council's, the County's and national interests for you to recommend that Cabinet reject the commitment proposed in the contractor's RPP and terminate the existing contract this month.

In writing to you, we respect the fact that you are uniquely placed "in the hot seat" on this matter. We trust that you will welcome this expression of our grave concerns on behalf of communities across Hertfordshire and farther afield.

Kind regards,

John Webb
07960 825668
for HertsWOW