

EDP24

NEWS

Green light for waste incinerator

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A controversial incinerator for Suffolk will go ahead despite a last-ditch attempt by opposition councillors to scupper the plans.

After a debate yesterday, the scheme got the go-ahead - even though no one has been told where it might be sited. A full council meeting turned down by 43 votes to 22 the Labour opposition's motion to send the plans back to the cabinet. The meeting was arranged under the council's call-in rules after Labour said the decision had not been made properly.

The council is set to make its private finance initiative bid for the £500m plan today. Had it missed today's deadline, it would have had to wait another six months. Conservative councillor Graham Newman said the delay would have cost the council £50,000 a day and £9m.

A shortlist of six sites has been drawn up, but not published. The council says an incinerator, which would also generate electricity, would be cheaper than spiralling landfill taxes. But Labour and the Liberal Democrats think the council should aim to increase recycling.

Labour leader Julian Swainson said: "The key issue is the siting of any incinerator. I think it is reckless to propose an incinerator, which will always arouse fears, without establishing that you have a site which has the support of the community."

He said there were three further risks: "the health risk from emissions, the risk of high running costs, and the risk of fossil fuels being needed to run it".

And he said that the experience in Norfolk - where an incinerator was planned in Costessey but dropped after fierce opposition - should act as an example for Suffolk.

Labour councillor Sandy Martin said that one study had shown an increase in cancers in people living near incinerators. He said: "In our papers there is no study of the health effects or the emissions of toxins. I have heard councillors claiming nothing will come out of the chimney other than water vapour. This is patent nonsense. This will commit the council to astronomical costs for the next 30 years."

Conservative John Goodwin said: "We have heard that Norfolk has failed. I am sure we will not fail. Have the opposition considered what their grandiose plans will cost? Have they considered what the cost to the taxpayer will be if these plans are delayed?"

The Liberal Democrats called for a public referendum on the plans.