

**CABINET MEMBER FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING, DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT,  
STRATEGIC HOUSING, OPERATIONAL PROPERTY AND WASTE – CLLR TOBY STURGIS**

**WASTE AND ENVIRONMENT SERVICES**

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**REFERENCE:** SDSPW- 04- 16

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**RESIDENTS' VAN AND TRAILER PERMITS FOR HOUSEHOLD RECYCLING CENTRES**

**Purpose of Report**

1. This report proposes changes to the access provided for those Wiltshire residents that use vans or large trailers when visiting the Council's household recycling centres (HRCs), through the introduction of a non-chargeable permit scheme.

**Relevance to the Council's Business Plan**

2. **Improve local environment** – the measures proposed will make it easier for the majority of Wiltshire householders to access their local HRC, in order to dispose of their waste appropriately and recycle as much as possible. We would also anticipate that queues to gain entry would reduce, thereby reducing the potential carbon impact of site visitors.
3. **Key Action (11) of the Council's Business Plan (2013-2017) - Realign £100m to deliver council priorities** – the delivery of savings from a range of different services facilitates this key action, with this proposal contributing to this aim.
4. **People and places – the proposal places our customers and residents first.** Ceasing to accept waste from non-Wiltshire residents and commercial businesses will improve the customer experience of our householders by making it easier for residents to access the sites.
5. **Outcome 3 – everyone lives in a high quality environment.** We anticipate that queuing will reduce at HRC sites, encouraging greater use of the sites by Wiltshire residents in order to recycle and divert from landfill the waste they produce.
6. **Efficiency** - The proposal promotes the more efficient operation of the sites, with a focus on managing the waste from Wiltshire households, for the benefit of Wiltshire residents.
7. **Principle 6 - Services easier to access** – officers are working to design an online application system to enable Wiltshire residents affected to obtain a permit. This will build on the success of the online payment system for chargeable garden waste. There will be a process for those residents that choose not to apply online.

## **Main Considerations for the Council**

8. The proposed permitting scheme will allow Wiltshire residents with vans and trailers to use the HRCs up to 12 times a year after applying for a free permit from the Council. The scheme will also help prevent use of the HRCs by non-Wiltshire residents using vans and large trailers, and also reduce any illegal tipping of commercial waste at the sites. By avoiding the costs associated with managing the waste deposited by these individuals, there is the potential for the Council to make significant savings and also re-introduce essential capacity at the sites for the benefit of the Wiltshire residents that the Council has a statutory duty to provide HRC sites for.
9. The implementation of a permitting scheme aimed at allowing Wiltshire residents using vans and large trailers continued to access to the HRCs, but reducing the amount of commercial waste and material from people out of the county from being deposited at the sites is a proportionate approach, which should enable the Council to deliver savings.
10. The budget adopted by full Council on 23 February 2016 included specific savings proposals relating to the Waste Service. These savings are required by the Council due to continuing reductions in central government funding, whilst demand for other key services increase.
11. The Council's HRC network was the subject of service changes in 2015/16, with all sites reducing opening hours. Whilst the sites were able to accommodate the number of visitors over the winter they have become increasingly busy since Easter with some sites experiencing significant queues at their busiest periods. These changes allowed the Council to make savings of £300,000 per year.
12. The Council has a statutory duty to provide sites for persons resident in its area to dispose of their household waste, free of charge. Councils are not required to accept waste from people living outside their area, or accept non-household waste, such as commercial waste at their HRCs. Environmental Permits issued by the Environment Agency for each HRC define the types of waste that may be accepted at the sites, and in Wiltshire's case do not provide for commercial waste to be deposited. Knowingly accepting commercial waste would result in a breach of the Environmental Permit relating to a site, as regulated by the Environment Agency.
13. Officers have engaged with three other local authorities to assess the impacts they have seen following the introduction of permits for vans and large trailers. In all cases, the local authorities report that they believe commercial waste at their sites reduced considerably, but that residents were able to continue to access the sites with limited restriction. Significant reductions were also recorded against the tonnage of materials deposited at their HRCs. These reductions mainly involved wood, soil and rubble and residual (non-recyclable) waste, all items which could be commercial waste.
14. The experience of these other local authorities that already operate HRC permitting schemes for householders using vans and large trailers has been carefully considered. Analysis of the impacts shows clear reductions in tonnage delivered to their HRCs. Wiltshire Council currently pays its contractor for every tonne of waste managed under the contract, and therefore officers have concluded that the introduction of such a scheme in Wiltshire has the potential to make net savings of £240,000 in the current year (from September 2016/17). This would be achieved through avoided waste management costs and landfill tax, assuming similar tonnage reductions are realised. Further savings could be achieved in 2017/18 as full year impact would be seen.

15. Analysis of the experience of other authorities shows that we could expect to receive 5,300 applications for permits from Wiltshire residents wishing to use a van or large trailer. This represents 2.5% of Wiltshire households.
16. All of the authorities neighbouring Wiltshire, with the exception of Swindon, have in place, or are considering introducing, some form of HRC access restriction. Whilst no specific data is available, this situation may result in some individuals using Wiltshire's sites as an alternative, primarily due to our current lack of restrictions.
17. Residents would be able to apply for their free permit online, and following our recent experience with chargeable garden waste, we would anticipate between 70 and 75% of applications being made using an online form. The remaining applications would be made over the phone, with forms being posted out to applicants where needed.
18. Permits will allow up a maximum of 12 visits per year, and will be marked in such a way as to limit fraudulent copies being produced. The permits will be designed to allow them to be stamped by HRC staff at each visit. Permits will not expire after one year, so residents with a van or large trailer can take more than a year to use up their 12 visits before needing to renew.
19. The democratic process of publication of the Intention of the Cabinet Member to make the decision is designed to ensure open, fair and honest administration.
20. This report is clear on the desired outcomes and aims, namely to deliver an estimated net saving of £240,000 during 2016/17. In doing so, and by ensuring the application process for those residents requiring a permit is easily accessible, the proposal will ensure that the HRCs continue to operate in the most cost effective and efficient manner, making sure best value is achieved for the benefit of the Council and its residents.
21. The proposal is distinct from other permitting systems that now apply to Wiltshire HRCs.

## **Background**

22. Waste Services have several savings targets identified in the 2016/17 budget adopted by full Council on 23 February 2016. These include the introduction of charging for various waste items at HRCs.
23. Officers have assessed the viability of introducing charges in 2016/17 and have concluded that the necessary online systems to facilitate this will not be in place in order to achieve the savings targets in this financial year. However, further development work has been programmed to support the introduction of charges during 2017/18.
24. The development of a new online payment system to allow HRC charging will be relatively complex. However, an online system to produce non-chargeable permits should be delivered in time to contribute to savings targets in 2016/17. The development costs for the van and trailer permitting scheme are also low, estimated to be in the region of £5,000, with a further £13,000 arising from postage, communications and administrative costs.
25. The online application system is being developed in-house by ICT and will be delivered to allow applications to be processed from early August, with the permitting scheme being enforced from early September 2016.

26. It has become increasingly common for local authorities to impose some form of access restriction at their HRCs. This reduces the potential for commercial waste to be illegally deposited and preserves reasonable access for the residents for which the sites are intended.
27. The Portfolio Holder for Waste has also requested that options be considered to help alleviate queuing at key HRC sites. These have occurred over the busier summer months following the reduction in opening hours and days implemented in July 2015. After the Council received complaints about the congestion at HRCs, the Portfolio Holder for Waste visited all of the sites and identified that vans and trailers often add to congestion within the sites themselves and take longer to unload. Inevitably this adds to the problem of queuing vehicles.

### **Communications**

28. The proposed changes would be supported by a communications strategy focused on raising public awareness of the new permit scheme in Wiltshire, but also educating and advising commercial waste producers of their statutory duty to manage their waste responsibly, and of the alternative waste disposal options that are available to them.

### **Overview and Scrutiny Engagement**

29. The Waste Service Changes task group considered the proposed introduction of free-to-apply for permits for members of the public with vans or large trailers. The task group was first made aware of possible plans for the scheme at their meeting on 3 February 2016, and subsequent discussions with officers took place on 29 February and 31 March.
30. It was considered by the task group that the Van Permit Programme, referenced as being used in Poole, would provide possible benefits such as reducing the amount of illegally deposited commercial waste at Wiltshire HRCs. The task group intends to include a recommendation in its final report which recommends that the Van Permit Programme be implemented in Wiltshire.

### **Safeguarding Implications**

31. There are not considered to be any direct safeguarding implications due to the proposed changes.

### **Public Health Implications**

32. There are not considered to be any Public Health implications arising from this decision.

### **Corporate Procurement Implications**

33. The current contract with Hills Waste Solutions would be amended to deal with any new processes that would be required to be implemented on the sites, if needed.
34. The development of the online transaction system to facilitate permit applications will be delivered by the Council's ICT team as part of their existing internal development programme.
35. The procurement of the necessary stationery for the permits will be subject to the Council's existing framework agreement.

## **Environmental and Climate Change Considerations**

36. There are not considered to be any significant environmental and climate change implications arising from this decision. We anticipate that less material will be deposited at Wiltshire HRCs as a consequence of the changes, potentially leading to less material being disposed of to landfill in the county.
37. A further environmental benefit that we anticipate will result from the proposed permit scheme is that Wiltshire householders should face fewer queues when accessing the HRCs at the busiest times, clearly reducing the impact of cars waiting to use the sites with engines running. Reduced waste at the sites may also result in less frequent transfer of materials from HRCs to other waste management sites, materials bulking facilities and disposal points.

## **Equalities Impact of the Proposal**

38. Following an Equalities Impact Assessment, there are not considered to be any inequalities issues arising from these proposals.
39. Residents who use a van instead of car as their primary means of transport will still be able to access the HRCs free of charge, although visits by vans will be limited to 12 per year, or the equivalent of one a month. However, we recognise that the available payload of a van or large trailer is far greater than a typical family car, so van owners are still able to deposit the same or similar quantities of waste to car-using residents visiting more frequently over a year. The same applies to residents who choose to use large trailers to take waste to their HRC, and which will be subject to the same permitting regime.

## **Risk Assessment**

40. The proposal to implement permits for residents using vans and large trailers to access HRCs is expected to reduce queuing at key sites, therefore helping to reduce the risks associated with vehicles queued on the highway.
41. There is a risk that the reduction in tonnage projected is not achieved and therefore the anticipated saving is not realised.
42. Officers consider there is little reputational risk to the authority on the basis that the permitting system is designed to both help improve the experience of Wiltshire residents using the HRCs, whilst still allowing reasonable and free access to those residents that regularly bring large vehicles and trailers on to the sites.
43. There is a minor risk of confrontation between site staff and visitors with vans or trailers if no valid permit can be produced. Systems are being developed to deal with these issues before the schemes are implemented.
44. The development of the necessary ICT systems to facilitate online applications has been established as part of the ICT work programme for 2016/17, and has been fully resourced.

## **Financial Implications**

45. The proposed changes should generate net savings of £240,000 in 2016/17; this figure includes an estimated £82,000 in landfill tax that would otherwise be paid on waste received at the HRCs. This proposal enables the service to deliver savings identified and listed in the 2016/2017 budget book. Additional savings would be expected in 2017/18.

46. Development and communication costs have been identified as being in the region of £20,000 and these have been included in the savings figure above. We would anticipate the majority of residents affected would apply for a permit online. Administration of the scheme will be delivered within existing waste service resources.

### **Legal Implications**

47. If these changes are implemented, the Council would continue to provide HRCs in accordance with its statutory duty under Section 51 of the Environmental protection Act 1990.

### **Options Considered**

48. To:
- (i) Introduce permits for residents using vans and large trailers to access HRCs up to 12 times per year.
  - (ii) Continue with current unlimited access.

### **Reason for Proposal**

49. This decision is proposed in order to achieve challenging savings targets in the face of reducing central government grants and increasing demands on key council services.
50. A further significant benefit would be an anticipated reduction in overall HRC visitor numbers, which would alleviate congestion at the sites and result in extra capacity for Wiltshire residents.

### **Proposal**

51. That, with effect from September 2016, Wiltshire residents wishing to access the Council's HRCs with either a van or large trailer will be required to apply for a non-chargeable permit allowing a maximum of 12 visits per year.

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### **The following unpublished documents have been relied on in the preparation of this Report:**

None