

Title of meeting:	Cabinet
Date of meeting:	Tuesday 27 July 2021
Subject:	Household Waste Recycling Centre Operations update and booking system
Report by:	James Hill - Director of Housing, Neighbourhood and Building Services
Report Author:	Dave Emmett - Head of Waste Collection and Disposal
Wards affected:	All
Key decision:	No
Full Council decision:	No

1 Purpose of report

The purpose of this report is to provide Cabinet an update on operations at Portsmouth's Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) in light of the Government's Roadmap towards the gradual relaxation of measures to control the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes provision to retain in the short-term the booking system that was successfully implemented during the pandemic.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Cabinet approves the retention of the HWRC booking system until at least March 2022 to manage customer demand and facilitate continuation of a controlled and safe HWRC operation while visitor numbers are increased as, social distancing restrictions are reduced. This is in-line with our Waste Disposal Authority Partners Hampshire County Council and Southampton City Council.
- 2.2 That the Cabinet approves the reintroduction of access to cyclists on a controlled basis at Portsmouth HWRC, from July 2021, utilising the HWRC booking system.
- 2.3 That the Cabinet notes Hampshire County Council (HCC) have approved the commencement of the £5 charge for non-residents using Hampshire's 24 HWRCs from 1 September 2021. This decision will not impact residents of Portsmouth wishing to use Hampshire's sites because of the joint HWRC and disposal partnership arrangements we have in place with HCC. Hampshire residents will also not be impacted using Portsmouth HWRC. Portsmouth residents will be required to register their vehicle with HCC to use the Hampshire sites, but not if they only wish to use Portsmouth HWRC. Registration is free of charge for Portsmouth residents because

of the reciprocal use agreement with HCC. The Portsmouth HWRC cross-border policy decision was made by the Cabinet Member for Environment & Community Safety on 05 February 2019 - [Household waste recycling centre cross border charging.](#)

- 2.4 That the Cabinet notes that HCC has approved the removal of glass banks from Hampshire's 24 HWRCs from 1 July 2021 in line with the previously taken decisions, which were deferred during covid-19 restrictions. This decision will not impact Portsmouth HWRC, and PCC will retain the glass banks at the site because of separate glass collections arrangements we have in place with Biffa, the City Council's waste collections contractor.

3 Background

- 3.1 Portsmouth City Council reopened Portsmouth HWRC on Monday 11 May 2020, in-line with Hampshire County Councils 24 site network following the enforced closure during the national lockdown from 24 March 2020, in response to central Government and industry desire for sites to reopen. New social distancing measures and operational procedures were introduced at all sites in Hampshire including Portsmouth HWRC to protect both the general public and contractors, who operate and service the sites, from contracting Covid-19. To manage demand and address significant congestion issues seen around the site, a booking system was implemented at Portsmouth HWRC from 01 July 2020.
- 3.2 Despite some initial challenges created predominantly by excessive demand the booking system has proved to be very successful. The queuing outside Portsmouth HWRC was eliminated and allowed the additional Colas traffic measures and site security that was required to be removed which significantly reduced the additional cost of service provision. Through close analysis of data and on-site observations, the number of slots available per half hour at the site has been maximised and adapted, with 416 slots bookable per day (around 2,912 per week) bookable up to 7 days in advance. A number of unsolicited compliments have been received from members of the public who find the booking system more convenient and a better customer experience than queuing for long periods of time.
- 3.3 During the pandemic, the number of vehicles and customers able to attend a site at any time was restricted to support social distancing rules. Implementing the booking system in conjunction with the closure of a proportion of parking spaces with barriers assisted in this aim to maintain at least a 1m+ distance between site staff and customers, while eliminating disruptive queuing seen after the initial reopening of sites.
- 3.4 Access to the HWRC has been restricted to vehicles only since reopening in May 2020 in order to ensure that the site operates safely in line with the Government guidelines and to support social distancing recommendations.

- 3.5 The decision to limit access to vehicle users only since the pandemic has not proved to be a significant issue, with just 1 enquiry received regarding cargo bike access. However, as recognised highway users, cyclists wishing to visit Portsmouth HWRCs had not been unduly restricted prior to March 2020, but the volume of customers using bicycles has traditionally been very low. So-called 'cargo bikes' have increased in popularity in recent years, enabling customers to bring bulkier items than a regular bicycle would permit.
- 3.6 It should be noted that HWRCs are primarily provided for the deposit of bulky household and garden waste items unsuitable for kerbside waste collections such as furniture and wood, many of which are unconducive to being carried by cyclists. Carrying heavy and/or bulky items by bicycle can be a risky practice. In Portsmouth the domestic kerbside recycling service, small electrical item collections and recycling points provided (glass, textile, carton, media) offer a convenient and effective alternative for small recyclable items.

4. Reasons for recommendations

- 4.1 The success of the vaccination programme nationally has been a cornerstone behind the progress of the Government's Roadmap to relax measures that were implemented to control the virus. As the Government works towards Step 4 in the Roadmap, it is possible that some restrictions could be removed from 19 July 2021 onwards to enable Portsmouth HWRC to increase capacity back to pre-COVID levels. However, despite the continued success of the vaccination programme, Government advisors have warned that there is the potential for some restrictions to return during Winter 2021/22 and for some form of social distancing to continue to be required in the short to medium term or on an ad hoc basis in the future, the booking system is the best and most effective way to continue to manage potential future restrictions.
- 4.2 The booking system has demonstrated that managing customer throughput is effective means of enabling the HWRC to operate more efficiently. Congestion was commonplace at Portsmouth HWRC on sunny weekends and key public holidays, creating delays on the local road network and increased vehicle emissions from idling cars queuing. Booking a slot enables residents to plan with confidence that they can deposit their waste swiftly, easily and with minimal waiting.
- 4.3 It is also proposed that cycles, which are able to safely access the sites using vehicular routes, are reintroduced to Portsmouth HWRC. A small adaptation to the existing booking system would enable cyclists to book a slot in the same way as a vehicle, noting it as a bicycle rather than providing a registration number.

5. Integrated impact assessment

An Integrated Impact Assessment has been completed

6. Legal implications

- 6.1 There are no legal implications arising directly from the recommendations in the report.

7. Director of Finance's comments

- 7.1 The cost to the Council of retaining the HWRC booking system until March 2022 would be approximately £6,000, this would be met from the existing Waste Disposal contract budget.

- 7.2 The reintroduction of cyclist access to the HWRC has no financial impact.

- 7.3 The amount of income that could be generated from the charge to cross border users is currently unknown, any proceeds from this will be fed back to Hampshire County Council as PCC have not implemented the charge at Portsmouth HWRC. It is unlikely to have a material financial impact on the Council because of the location of Portsmouth HWRC away from the County border.

- 7.4 The current cost of collection of glass from Hampshire HWRC's outweighs the amount of income it could generate from the collection of glass. This will provide a small saving to the overall cost of Waste Disposal across the region but is unlikely to be significant.

Signed by: **James Hill, Director of Housing, Neighbourhood and Building Services.**

Appendices:

Integrated Impact Assessment

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location



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The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/ rejected by on

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Signed by: