

Open Report on behalf of Andy Gutherson, Executive Director - Place

Report to:	Councillor D McNally, Executive Councillor for Waste and Trading Standards
Date:	13 - 23 July 2021
Subject:	Household Waste Recycling Centre Operation
Decision Reference:	I022474
Key decision?	No

Summary:

This Report seeks a decision from the Executive Councillor about the future operation of the Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs).

Recommendation(s):

That the Executive Councillor

1. subject to the removal of Covid-19 social distancing guidance, approves the removal of the HWRC booking system to allow residents to have uncontrolled access to the HWRCs; and
2. approves the continuation of a registration system to be used for residents with vans and trailers; and
3. delegates to the Executive Director – Place in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Waste and Trading Standards authority to determine the final form of and make changes to the detailed arrangements of 1) and 2) to address any operational concerns.

Alternatives Considered:

1.	Keep the booking system.
2.	Have a combined system which includes bookings during certain periods.
3	Not to introduce a registration system

Reasons for Recommendation:

To increase accessibility to HWRCs and maximise the amount of material which can be recycled. The registration system for vans and trailers should remain in place to continue to deter trade waste.

1. Background

The booking system at HWRCs was introduced to allow government guidelines on social distancing to be applied during the Covid-19 pandemic and is discussed in the Executive Report titled "Household Waste Recycling Centre Operation" (Appendix A).

This report reflects the proposed lifting of government guidelines on social distancing and discusses the need for a booking system for HWRC operations in future.

The three operations which are considered are:

- Keep the in the booking system
- Stop the booking system and revert to a historical model
- Have a system where there is a mixture of the two systems.

Keep the Booking System

The merits of the system have been discussed in detail in the previous report however the need to limit numbers will not exist once social distancing rules are lifted. There may be a public perception that the "click and tip" system has served its purpose and may not be required once society returns to a level of normality.

The main issue which is raising concern is the limitation on number of resident bookings which can be accepted. Each site has a limitation on the number of slots which are available on the JADU IT platform and the system is near its maximum capacity. There are many anecdotal reports that some members of the public cannot book a slot and the number of slots cannot be increased. The JADU platform will need investment, resources and time to develop including extra licences purchased for the Customer Service Centre to operate.

There have also been occasional periods where the booking system has failed in the last 12 months and HWRCs have had to function with an open door policy for such days.

Stop the Booking System

Access to HWRCs was uncontrolled for many years prior to the introduction of the booking system and there has always been a suspicion that trades people were using the sites to dispose of commercial waste at tax payers' expense. Under the booking system, the amount of material accepted at HWRCs during the Covid-19 restrictions was 24,558 tonnes for the year, compared to 71,450 tonnes in the previous year. The two periods are not directly comparable as the opening hours are not exactly the same and

there have been restrictions on types of material accepted, however it is still a significant decrease.

The reduction of 46,892 tonnes may be due to many factors but the most obvious factor may be that trade waste has been deterred during this recent period. The booking system requires the public to register online and any trailers and vans have to obtain a permit prior to access. There is an assumption that trade waste was previously deposited at HWRCs in vans or trailers, as opposed to family cars and therefore it may be that the permit requirement has stopped commercial users from accessing sites.

There is no recorded evidence to support this assumption, however the site contractors have reported that the number of vans and trailers has been considerably reduced during the restricted period. Therefore it is proposed that a registration system for vans and trailers can still be kept, whereby those category of users have to register in advance and be allocated a specific number of permits (for example 12) to be used throughout the year at the resident's discretion. This allows access at any time but does place a reasonable amount of restrictions on the number of visits.

The site contractors have stated that they have the capacity to receive more residents on site under the booking system and have requested the number of slots to be increased. However this is not currently possible due to the limitations of JADU in its current format.

There is also an issue with the number of 'no-shows' at HWRCs after bookings have been made. This currently runs at around 12-15% and represents an inefficient burden on the service when the greater demand of frustrated residents could be satisfied.

In terms of timescale for when the booking system could be stopped, it is proposed that the system be changed once operational details are agreed with the site contractors and social distancing restrictions are lifted. Relaxation of social distancing guidelines may create an expectation that the restrictions will be lifted and therefore this option would help to prevent any confusion and conflict if a communications message can be released well in advance.

Combined System

There are concerns that completely removing the booking system will incur a sudden influx of residents which could become unmanageable at peak periods. The consequence being, that sites may have to be closed on safety grounds. This has occasionally occurred at certain HWRCs such as Spalding and Lincoln, possibly once or twice a year. A method of preventing this could be to have the booking system operating on the weekend. However the system would still need staff management on a weekend. There would also be inevitable confusion for the public causing conflict to arise on site. This combined approach is not therefore recommended but could be considered in future if issues repeatedly arise at particular HWRCs.

Costs

The amount of material accepted at HWRCs during the Covid-19 restrictions and booking system is 24,558 tonnes compared to 71,450 tonnes in the previous year and presented a cost saving. The reduction of 46,892 tonnes may be due to many factors but the most obvious reason may be that trade waste has not been presented during this period due to the registration requirement.

The current cost of processing "click and tip" calls through the Customer Service Centre (CSC) is known to be around £8,000 per month and the cost of staff time estimated at £1,000 per month.

If the booking system is kept then the JADU software will need developing to enable more booking slots to be made available that would have a cost of £5,000 with more staff time to be included which cannot be quantified at this point.

Complaints

There are still a high proportion of complaints from the public which are identified in the previous report pertaining to the continued use of the booking system. There is also a great deal of interest in the local media as to when the system will be removed. Some complaints state that fly-tipping is a consequence of the booking system, however there is no evidence to connect the two issues but the public perception still continues.

Regional Approach

A quick survey of neighbouring authorities shows that there is a mix of approaches as to whether sites should operate with a booking system or with unrestricted access. This may reflect the fact that social distancing guidelines are still in place and pressure seems to be mounting in the media nationally to remove such systems. However one issue that appears to be consistent is the requirement to have the public registered in advance to deter out of boundary visitors and trade waste.

2. Legal Issues:

Equality Act 2010

Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act.

Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The relevant protected characteristics are age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation.

Having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to:

- Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic.
- Take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it.
- Encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

The steps involved in meeting the needs of disabled persons that are different from the needs of persons who are not disabled include, in particular, steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities.

Having due regard to the need to foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to tackle prejudice, and promote understanding.

Compliance with the duties in section 149 may involve treating some persons more favourably than others.

The duty cannot be delegated and must be discharged by the decision-maker. To discharge the statutory duty the decision-maker must analyse all the relevant material with the specific statutory obligations in mind. If a risk of adverse impact is identified consideration must be given to measures to avoid that impact as part of the decision making process.

An Equality Impact Assessment has not been carried out. However the recommendation to make changes is not considered to have a detrimental impact on people with protected characteristics as steps are put in place at the HWRCs to ensure that they can be used without consideration of protected characteristics especially by older people and people with a disability who may have disproportionately greater difficulty accessing and using the centres.

Joint Strategic Needs Analysis (JSNA) and the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (JHWS)

The Council must have regard to the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and the Joint Health & Well Being Strategy (JHWS) in coming to a decision.

This obligation has been considered and the proposals in this report are considered to impact positively on health and wellbeing as appropriate disposal of waste impacts positively on the environment and on health.

Crime and Disorder

Under section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, the Council must exercise its various functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder in its area (including anti-social and other behaviour adversely affecting the local environment), the misuse of drugs, alcohol and other substances in its area and re-offending in its area.

This obligation has been considered, but is not thought to be directly affected by the proposals in this report.

3. Conclusion

As the country emerges from Covid-19 lockdown a decision is required on the future operation of the HWRC sites including the booking system which was introduced as a means of managing safety at the Council's HWRC sites during the pandemic.

This report sets out the issues relating to the sites and particularly the system and its future and invites the Executive Councillor to approve that the booking system be stopped subject to operational changes being agreed and social distancing restrictions are lifted.

4. Legal Comments:

The Council has the power to pursue the recommendations.

The decision is consistent with the Policy Framework and within the remit of the Executive Councillor.

5. Resource Comments:

Although the implementation of a booking system is only one of the factors that contributed to the reduced volume of waste being presented at HWRCs, its removal is likely to result in increased volumes and consequently increased haulage and processing costs in excess of the saving in administration arrangements.

The Waste service's approved 2021/22 revenue budget for the operation of HWRCs is however based on pre-pandemic arrangements and it is therefore expected that operating costs following a return to less controlled access to the sites, will still be contained within that budget.

6. Consultation

a) Has Local Member Been Consulted?

No

b) Has Executive Councillor Been Consulted?

Yes

c) Scrutiny Comments

The Report will be considered by the Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee on 13 July 2021 and the comments of the Committee will be reported to the Executive Councillor

d) Risks and Impact Analysis

See the body of the Report

7. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Executive Report titled "Household Waste Recycling Centre Operation"

8. Background Papers

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

This report was written by Mike Reed, who can be contacted on 07557 169890 or mike.reed@lincolnshire.gov.uk.