

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Decision Record

Decision Maker:	Director of Economy, Transport and Environment
Date:	2021
Title:	Household Waste Recycling Centres COVID Response Update
Report From:	Waste Contracts and Programmes Manager

Contact name: Paul Laughlin

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1. The decisions:

- 1.1 That the Director of Economy, Transport and Environment notes the success of the booking system since its introduction in June 2020.
- 1.2 That the Director of Economy, Transport and Environment approves the retention of the booking system for up to a further 12 months to March 2022, subject to the progress of the Government's roadmap out of COVID-19 restrictions.
- 1.3 That the Director of Economy, Transport and Environment authorises feasibility work into potential future system provision and integration with other waste IT systems, including internal and external system providers to evaluate potential delivery options beyond the current system extension, should a decision be made in the future to consider retaining a pre booking scheme, given that extending the current arrangements will not be possible.
- 1.4 That the Director of Economy, Transport and Environment approves the rollout of a staggered programme that incrementally increases capacity and eases existing restrictions at all sites in parallel with the Government's planned exit from lockdown.

2. Reason for the decision:

- 2.1 The HWRC booking system was introduced as part of the COVID response to achieve social distancing at all HWRCs while addressing the highway congestion caused by high customer demand. With Government social distancing measures likely to remain at least in the short-term, and the potential for some form of social distancing to still be required during Winter 2021/22, retention of the scheme will enable Hampshire County Council to continue to provide a safe public service and manage customer demand effectively.

3. Other options considered and rejected:

- 3.1 Removing the booking system while social distancing measures remain in place as this would inevitably lead to a return to the highway congestion that was seen immediately after the re-opening of sites after the first lockdown last year.
- 3.2 Removing social distancing measures at sites is not possible until Government advice is changed or removed.
- 3.3 The option to not increasing the capacity at the HWRCs has been rejected as this will not tie in with the Governments roadmap and restrict capacity at the HWRCs at what is historically a peak time in terms of demand.

4. Conflicts of interest:

- 4.1 Conflicts of interest declared by the decision-maker:

5. Dispensation granted by the Conduct Advisory Panel: none.

6. Reason(s) for the matter being dealt with if urgent: not applicable.

7. Statement from the Decision Maker:

Approved by:



Date:

30 / 03 / 2021

**Director of Economy, Transport and Environment
Stuart Jarvis**

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Decision Report

Decision Maker:	Director of Economy, Transport and Environment
Date:	2021
Title:	Household Waste Recycling Centres Booking System
Report From:	Waste Contracts and Programmes Manager

Contact name: Paul Laughlin

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Purpose of this Report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) booking system and to gain approval to retain the system for a further 12 months to manage customer demand across the network whilst COVID-19 restrictions remain in place.

Recommendations

2. That the Director of Economy, Transport and Environment notes the success of the booking system since its introduction in June 2020.
3. That the Director of Economy, Transport and Environment approves the retention of the booking system for up to a further 12 months to March 2022, subject to the progress of the Government's roadmap out of COVID-19 restrictions.
4. That the Director of Economy, Transport and Environment authorises feasibility work into potential future system provision and integration with other waste IT systems, including internal and external system providers to evaluate potential delivery options beyond the current system extension, should a decision be made in the future to consider retaining a pre booking scheme, given that extending the current arrangements will not be possible.
5. That the Director of Economy, Transport and Environment approves the rollout of a staggered programme that incrementally increases capacity and eases existing restrictions at all sites in parallel with the Government's planned exit from lockdown.

Executive Summary

6. This report seeks to provide an update on the provision of the HWRC Service as the restrictions resulting from the COVID pandemic begins to ease. It outlines the rationale for retaining the HWRC booking system, introduced in June 2020 as a COVID response, for up to a further 12 months while Government social distancing measures remain in place and the UK begins to make the transition away from COVID restrictions. During this period, given that any further extension of the current Single Tender Approval (STA) will not be possible, it is also recommended that an evaluation is progressed to determine whether such a system could be integrated with other existing HWRC digital services and for options to be explored with internal and external IT experts to assess the viability and cost-benefits of developing such an integrated system should it be decided to consider retaining the scheme in the longer term as a result of the need to continue to have the ability to manage the potential for ongoing medium to long term impacts of the pandemic.

Contextual Information

7. Hampshire County Council provides 24 HWRCs across Hampshire for residents to deliver their bulky household and garden waste. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the HWRCs received in excess of four million unique visits each year.
8. Following the first national lockdown in Spring 2020, the HWRC network reopened to the public on 11 May 2020. As a result of high customer demand coupled with onsite restrictions designed to safely maintain social distancing guidelines, severe queues developed at most sites causing serious disruption to the highway network. Consequently, and in line with several other local authorities, an online booking system was procured through a Single Tender Approval and implemented on 15 June 2020 to manage the flow of customers into each site.
9. Despite some initial challenges created predominantly by excessive demand, the system has proved to be very successful. The dangerous queuing outside HWRCs was eliminated and allowed the additional site security that was required to be removed which significantly reduced the cost of service provision.
10. A close working relationship has been developed with Veolia to evaluate the number of slots available per half hour at every site such that throughputs can be maximised and adapted based on each site's individual profile. More than 6,000 slots are now bookable per day (c.45,000 per week). 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.
11. In order to install the booking system at short notice, an external 'off the shelf' product was procured. An online portal is available where residents can select their local site from a drop-down list and book a half-hour slot to visit the HWRC. The booking system is quick and easy to use, enabling residents to

book a slot up to seven days in advance. A limited telephone booking system is also provided for those customers unable to book online.

12. On the 22 February 2021, the Prime Minister announced the roadmap to cautiously ease lockdown restrictions. This process coincides with the traditional increase in demand seen at the HWRCs in spring and over the Easter weekend. Work has been undertaken with Veolia to identify the measures that need to be taken on site and with regards to communications to site users in order to ensure their safety and that of site staff.
13. Whilst there is a clear aspiration for things to return to normal as per the roadmap, it has already been made clear by Government advisors that some form of social distancing is likely to be necessary in the longer term and therefore longer term considerations should be given to how this is managed at the HWRCs.
14. In order to provide a better customer experience, it is an aspiration of the County Council to integrate the systems, if possible, and initial discussions have been held with internal IT experts. As part of this work, it is proposed that the booking system is included as part of these plans to ensure that, should the need arise to maintain social distancing in the longer term, a solution is available which is integrated as part of the wider service offering.

Finance

15. The booking system was procured under a single tender process due to the urgency of the requirement and based on discussion with a neighbouring local authority who had experience of it and recommended the supplier.
16. A contract with the external provider of the current booking system is in place until June 2021. This costs around £20,000 per six month period. There is sufficient scope in terms of financial limits for single tenders (£100,000) to extend the arrangements as the maximum total spend will be approximately £90,000 if the system is retained for up to 12 months. It would be necessary to modify the existing Single Tender Waiver for the additional spend (c.£50,000) and time up to 31 March 2022, allowing scope for short-term cancellation should circumstances alter significantly. While it is recognised that an open procurement process for any extension would offer greater transparency, it is recommended that remaining with the incumbent provider will offer best value in uncertain times and reduce the impact of any negative customer experience as a result of implementing a new system.
17. It will not be possible to further extend these arrangements and so any proposals beyond the proposed 12 month extension would be require a separate open procurement process and formal decision making process.

Equalities

18. It is not considered that the proposal has any impacts on any of the groups with protected characteristics. Residents are used to booking systems for a wide range of services such as doctors appointments, haircuts and use of leisure facilities.
19. Hampshire residents within the groups with protected characteristics are well practiced in accessing and making bookings for these services.
20. Bookings can be made online or by phone to ensure residents can access the system.

Conclusions

21. The booking system has proved an effective way to manage customer throughput during the current challenging circumstances. It ensures that site operatives are able to maintain social distancing requirements by controlling and managing the flow of customers into and through the site. It also affords greater flexibility for the public to manage their daily routine without having to plan for a possible queue.
22. At present the Government roadmap indicates a date of 21 June 2021 for a number of restrictions to be lifted, however this will depend on the continued success of the vaccination programme while 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 be required in the medium to long term. It is, therefore, sensible to maintain the system at least until that winter period has passed in order to monitor the ongoing impacts and investigate the longer term options beyond that point.

Next Steps

23. The booking system has demonstrated that managing customer throughput is an effective means of enabling the HWRC to operate more efficiently. Congestion is commonplace at several HWRCs on sunny weekends and key public holidays, creating delays on the local road network. Booking a slot enables residents to book with confidence that they can deposit their waste swiftly and easily. Many similar authorities also now operate a similar system, while others are actively considering implementing one.
24. As the country begins to exit lockdown, there will be a need to review HWRC operations and consider if and how onsite capacity may be increased safely. It is recommended that a staggered programme is developed to incrementally increase capacity over a defined period of time, allowing monitoring at each stage to evaluate the impact on site operations. The booking system would play a crucial role in this by facilitating a control method and prevent HWRCs getting overwhelmed during what is traditionally the busiest period of the year.
25. Should social distancing measures be required in the future, even if intermittently, then the booking system would be valuable tool going forward. Given that the current arrangements will not be further extended exploring the

future integration of a the booking system with other pre-existing HWRC web-based services would be useful, as well as offering additional benefits of an enhanced the customer experience by enabling residents to register their vehicle and book a convenient slot simultaneously and reduce the information they need to enter, while providing greater surety that bookings are made by residents from Hampshire or those neighbouring authorities with which there is an agreement. Exploring the market externally as well as engaging with County Council IT Services would be an effective way to evaluate the opportunities available and evaluate how this could be delivered in a sustainable and cost-effective way.

26. In line with the social distancing restrictions in place since May 2020, pedestrian and cycle access has been banned for safety reasons. A separate recommendation will be presented to the Executive Member for Economy, Transport and Environment in June 2021 to propose a trial programme to reintroduce pedestrian and cycle access on a controlled basis.

REQUIRED CORPORATE AND LEGAL INFORMATION:

Links to the Strategic Plan

Hampshire maintains strong and sustainable economic growth and prosperity:	yes
People in Hampshire live safe, healthy and independent lives:	yes
People in Hampshire enjoy a rich and diverse environment:	yes
People in Hampshire enjoy being part of strong, inclusive communities:	yes

Other Significant Links

Links to previous Member decisions:	
<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>
Direct links to specific legislation or Government Directives	
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-to-local-authorities-on-prioritising-waste-collections/guidance-on-prioritising-waste-collection-services-during-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic#household-waste-recycling-centres-hwrc	Updated 14 December 2020

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents	
<p>The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)</p>	
<u>Document</u>	<u>Location</u>
None	