

**REPORT TO:** Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board

**DATE:** 17 November 2021

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director – Enterprise, Community and Resources

**SUBJECT:** Household Waste Recycling Centres - Vehicle Access Policy

**WARD(S):** Borough-wide

## **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

The purpose of this report is to provide Members with information in respect of Halton's Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) and to ask Members to endorse proposed changes to the current HWRC Vehicle Access Policy and associated Vehicle Permit Scheme.

## **2. RECOMMENDED: That**

**1. Members endorse the proposals set out within the report; and**

**2. A report be presented to the Executive Board recommending that:**

- i. the HWRC booking system, as currently operating and as detailed within the report, be formally adopted as a replacement for the Vehicle Permit Scheme;**
- ii. the number of visits that can be made to the Council's HWRCs in a commercial type vehicle, van or a large trailer be limited to one per week; and**
- iii. the Council's Household Waste Recycling Centre Access Policy be amended accordingly to reflect the proposals set out in paragraphs 2.2.1 and 2.2.2 above.**

## **3. SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 3.1** In accordance with the requirements of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, the Council has a statutory duty to provide places where residents in its area may deposit their own household waste free of charge. In meeting this duty, the Council provides two Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs); one at Johnson's Lane in Widnes and one Picow Farm Road in Runcorn.
- 3.2** The Council's sites are provided for household waste only and waste generated through commercial operations or 'paid for' services (trade

waste) is not permitted. If trade waste is deposited at the Council's HWRCs it would result in the Council incurring additional costs that should be borne by those charging for the removal and disposal of such waste.

3.3 In September 2010, the Council's Executive Board approved a Household Waste Recycling Centre Access Policy and the implementation of a Vehicle Permit Scheme (Minute EXB48/2010 refers). The Policy and Vehicle Permit Scheme were introduced to help deter and prevent the depositing of 'trade waste' at the HWRCs by placing controls on access to sites in commercial type vehicles or with large trailers (those between 2 and 3 metres).

3.4 Under the Vehicle Permit Scheme, Halton residents who wish to access the sites using commercial type vehicles or with large trailers are required obtain a permit to do so. The scheme provided for two types of Permits as detailed below;

3.4.1 **Annual Permits** - available to residents of the borough who **own** a 'commercial-type' vehicle or large trailer and who wish to deposit rubbish, recyclables or smaller segregated household waste items. These permits are valid for one calendar year and allow unlimited visits.

3.4.2 **Temporary Permits** - available to residents of the borough who **own or are hiring or borrowing** a 'commercial-type' vehicle or large trailer and who wish to deposit materials other than those described in paragraph 3.4.1, such as bulky waste (furniture etc.), rubble and hardcore, scrap metal (white goods etc.), televisions and large electrical items, wood (fences etc).

*When originally adopted in 2010, the Council's Policy entitled householders to 12 Temporary Permits in a 12 month period, however, in April 2018, the Executive Board approved that the Vehicle Permit Scheme be amended and the number of Temporary Permits that each household would be eligible to receive be reduced from 12 per year to 6 per year (Minute EXB141/2018 refers).*

3.5 On 24<sup>th</sup> March 2020, following the Government's instructions in respect of non-essential journeys, and given that visits to HWRCs were not one of the four reasons for people being able to leaving their home at that time, the Council's two HWRCs were closed. When the sites re-opened on 4<sup>th</sup> May 2020, they were operated in accordance with strict guidelines and control measures that were put in place to ensure compliance with social distancing rules and the safety of staff and site users.

3.6 The HWRC control measures included a restriction on the number of vehicles allowed on site at any one time. Access to the centres was also limited to cars only with commercial type vehicles, vans and large

trailers being initially excluded from visiting the sites. The reason for this decision was due to the expected high demand and excessive queuing (which proved to be the case) and, given that vans can hold more waste and take longer to unload than cars, allowing vans access would have extended the already predicted lengthy queue times.

- 3.7 The Council began allowing visits to its HWRCs in commercial type vehicles or with large trailers from Monday 13<sup>th</sup> July 2020. The Vehicle Permit Scheme has been suspended since that date, and instead, a HWRC booking system was developed and has been in place to control visits to the sites in certain vehicle types. Initially, a limit was placed on the number of bookings that could be made at each centre per day, however, the daily threshold on visits was never reached at each centre and it is therefore the intention that, moving forward, the limitation on daily bookings be removed.
- 3.8 Bookings to visit a HWRC can be made over the telephone by calling the Council's Contact Centre and can also be requested by completing an online request form via the Council's website. When requesting a booking, householders must state which HWRC they wish to visit, the date that they intend to do so, and the materials that they will be depositing. Once the request has been verified by a Customer Services Advisor, the booking is made and confirmation is provided to the householder. Site attendants are notified of bookings by way of a report that is automatically generated and sent via email at 4pm each day. The report details the registration number of the vehicles that are booked in for the following day, and the waste types to be deposited by each.
- 3.9 The HWRC booking system was developed in-house. It has worked well and it has been the subject of little complaint. Indeed, Officers have received comments from some van owners that it is more convenient than the previous paper-based permit scheme. Whilst the paper-based permit scheme worked well, the HWRC booking system is considered to provide increased controls and prevention of abuse as it enables Officers to monitor visits and identify when either a vehicle or a household has used up their 6 'bulky household/DIY waste' visits. If they then attempt to make more than 6 in a 12 month period they are refused entry.
- 3.10 The system also allows Officers to monitor the permitted weekly visits for general waste and recyclables. As the daily van booking report produced for site attendants shows the type of waste that an individual should be bringing to the site, if the waste to be deposited is different than the householder had stated when making their booking, (ie they attempt to deposit 'bulky waste' after stating that they were taking 'general waste') they will be challenged by site attendants and the details reported to the Council's Enforcement Officers.
- 3.11 Whilst the HWRC booking system was originally introduced to control the number of vans accessing the HWRCs, and due to the suspension

of the Vehicle Permit Scheme, over time, as more vehicles have been permitted onto our HWRCs, and queuing/waiting times have reduced, the booking system is no longer required to control the flow of vans for that purpose. However, it is being recommended that the system be continued. It is accepted that householders are required to make a booking on each occasion that they wish to visit one of the Council's sites, and no 'same day' bookings can be accepted, however, overall, Officers consider that it has proven to be more effective and efficient than the original paper-based Permit Scheme. Further, residents do not need to travel to the Council's One Stop Shops to apply for permits and the requirement to print paper based permits is also eliminated; with the associated costs of doing so being avoided.

3.12 In addition to moving away from the Vehicle Permit Scheme and the implementation of the HWRC booking system, one other element of the Household Waste Recycling Centre Access Policy has also not been applied since the sites re-opened. Under the Council's current Policy (as stated in para 3.4.1 above) residents can make unlimited visits in a van or with a large trailer to deposit general waste and recyclable materials, however, since May 2020 visits have been restricted to a maximum of one per week. It is considered that one visit per week to deposit general waste and recyclable materials is sufficient to meet a householder's requirements.

3.13 Members of the Board are asked to consider and endorse that the HWRC booking system, as currently operating and as detailed within the report, be formally adopted as a replacement for the Vehicle Permit Scheme, and that, the number visits that a householder can make to a Halton HWRC in a commercial type vehicle or with a large trailer be limited to one per week.

## **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 Whilst savings are undeterminable, it is envisaged that the HWRC booking system and changes to the HWRC Access Policy will result in reduced costs being incurred by the Council, as a result of the increased controls with regards to the disposal of 'trade waste' at HWRCs and also from savings realised by moving away from a paper-based vehicle permit scheme.

## **6. POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 The proposals contained within this report would constitute changes to existing Policy.

## **7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 There are no other implications arising from this report.

## **8. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

## **8.1 Children and Young People in Halton**

No direct impact

## **8.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton**

No direct impact

## **8.3 A Healthy Halton**

No direct impact

## **8.4 A Safer Halton**

No direct impact

## **8.5 Halton's Urban Renewal**

No direct impact

## **9.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

9.1 The key risk is that failure to have in place adequate controls to restrict trade waste from entering HWRCs will leave the authority vulnerable to significant additional disposal costs.

## **10.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

10.1 There are no equality and diversity issues as a result of this report.

## **11.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

11.1 Executive Board Report - Household Waste Recycling Centres Vehicle Permit Scheme and Access Policy - 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2010

11.2 Executive Board Report - Household Waste Recycling Centres - 19<sup>th</sup> April 2018