

# Cheltenham Borough Council

## Cabinet – 20 December 2022

### Household Recycling Centre – Service Changes

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**Accountable member:**

Cabinet Member for Waste, Recycling and Street Services - Councillor Iain Dobie

**Accountable officer:**

Environmental Partnerships Manager – Karen Watson

**Accountable scrutiny committee:**

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**Ward(s) affected:**

All wards in the Borough

**Key Decision:**

Yes – a climate change assessment and an environmental impact assessment have been completed and are attached to this report.

**Executive summary:**

The provision of Household Recycling Centres (HRCs) is a statutory requirement for Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) under the Environment Protection Act (1990). GCC provide five HRCs across the County with the site at Wingmoor Farm located in Bishop's Cleeve the closest to Cheltenham borough. While Cheltenham Borough Council has no statutory requirement to provide an HRC, the Council continues to entirely fund the operation of the HRC at Swindon Road for the sole use of Cheltenham residents. CBC is the only District Council in Gloucestershire, and may be alone nationally in providing a discretionary and high-quality HRC, thereby enhancing the offer for Cheltenham residents who have the choice of using any of the sites provided by GCC as well CBC's service at Swindon Road. As such the site at Swindon Road supports the Council's corporate priorities relating to the environment by encouraging residents to recycle and reduce waste.

Following the pandemic much has changed for residents and the Council, including Brexit and the cost of living crisis which is impacting everyone alike. Given the reduction in site usage and the increasing budget pressures facing the Council it is now appropriate to review the household recycling centre and its post pandemic usage along with the cost of providing the service for the Council and local taxpayers.

The results from previous public consultation exercises and site usage data have been used to inform this report which recommends a reduction in site opening hours to deliver the financial savings required.

Proposed changes to the opening hours, including a Wednesday closure, will reduce energy consumption and therefore energy costs to support the climate emergency and budget pressures at the same time. It is estimated that the changes to opening hours will reduce net operating costs by approximately £35,000 per year.

Exploring the introduction of a wider range of recycling opportunities at the recycling centre will support our ambition to reduce the amount of residual waste disposed of at the site and provide opportunities, with our partners, to promote behaviour change around waste reduction and re-use as well as recycling.

## Recommendations:

1. To approve the opening times of the household recycling centre set out below to better reflect post pandemic site usage with effect from 1 February 2023 with no summer or wintertime variations:  
  
Monday – 8.30am – 4pm  
Tuesday – 8.30am – 4pm  
Wednesday – CLOSED in line with Gloucestershire County Council sites  
Thursday – 8.30am – 4pm  
Friday – 8.30am – 4pm  
Saturday – 8.30am – 3pm  
Sunday – 9am to 12 noon
  
  2. Delegated authority be given to the Director - Place and Communities, in consultation with the cabinet member, waste, recycling and street services, to:  
  
(a) take all necessary steps to implement recommendation 1, these measures may include the introduction of a booking system for HRC users,  
  
(b) implement initiatives to maximise waste reduction, re-use and recycling opportunities for residents in Cheltenham to support its climate emergency priority.
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## 1. Implications

### 1.1. Financial implications

Based on site usage figures and an assumption that 33% of site users for those hours the site will be closed in future dispose of their waste and recycling elsewhere, it is estimated that a £35,000 saving can be achieved from 1 April 2023 subject to income levels and any HR costs as a result of the changes. There is a risk that if waste and recycling moves to the kerbside that exceeds existing capacity this may necessitate the purchase of additional vehicles and crews however this is considered a low risk with such a small reduction in opening hours.

**Signed off by:** Jon Whitlock, Finance Business Partner, [jon.whitlock@cheltenham.gov.uk](mailto:jon.whitlock@cheltenham.gov.uk)

### 1.2. Legal implications

Where the implementation of the Recommendations results in variations to the current contractual arrangements, advice from Procurement and One Legal should be taken at the earliest opportunity as The Public Contracts Regulations 2015 contain limited provisions to

enable contracts to be varied during their term.

As a Waste Collection Authority, the Authority can provide, in addition to those sites provided by the Waste Disposal Authority, places where residents may deposit their household waste. There is no statutory service requirement for this Authority in relation to the opening hours of the site. The site at Swindon Road is however a well-established site and service. Any decision to change the service should only be taken after any necessary and proportionate consultation and 'due-regard' to any Public Sector Equalities Duties under the Equalities Act 2010.

Signed off by: One Legal – [legal.services@onelegal.org.uk](mailto:legal.services@onelegal.org.uk)

### 1.3. HR implications

Staffing levels at the household recycling centre will be reduced in line with the reduction in opening hours and the Council's service provider, Ubico, will be required to comply with the necessary staff consultation, process and procedure with the support of HR and this may have an impact on any financial savings. Ubico will seek to redeploy staff where possible.

**Signed off by:** Clare Jones, HR Business Partner, [clare.jones@publicagroup.uk](mailto:clare.jones@publicagroup.uk)

### 1.4. Environmental and climate change implications

Provision of the site supports our climate emergency goals and provides opportunities to promote and support residents with waste reduction initiatives as well as re-use working with our partners.

Cheltenham provides an excellent kerbside waste and recycling service which enables residents to recycle conveniently at home without travelling anywhere. Changes to opening hours is unlikely to reduce overall quantities of waste, but if these changes are combined with increased re-use and recycling activities and a widening of the range of recyclable materials at the site, there may be a slight overall reduction in waste volumes.

These increased activities will move us towards a more circular economy and help to reduce the need for new items to be produced and therefore reduce overall greenhouse gas emissions. Furthermore, any awareness raising campaigns on this topic may encourage more sustainable packaging to be purchased or certainly recycled where it can.

A reduction in opening hours will reduce the amount of energy required to light the site and to operate machinery, and the reduced lighting during non-daylight hours will lessen impact on nocturnal wildlife.

**Signed off by:**

Laura Tapping, Climate Emergency Programme Officer, [laura.tapping@cheltenham.gov.uk](mailto:laura.tapping@cheltenham.gov.uk)

### 1.5. Property/asset implications

There are no property or asset implications associated with a reduction in opening hours other than a reduction in energy consumption forecast.

**Signed off by:** Peter Woodley, Senior Estates Surveyor, [peter.woodley@cheltenham.gov.uk](mailto:peter.woodley@cheltenham.gov.uk)

## 1.6. Corporate policy framework implications

The recommendations as set out in the report, whilst seeing an overall reduction in the hours that the Household Recycling Centre is open, will ensure the centre remains open at times that are most convenient for local residents based on post-pandemic usage patterns whilst also delivering a financial saving estimated at £35,000 per year.

**Signed off by:** Richard Gibson, Head of communities, wellbeing and partnerships,  
richard.gibson@cheltenham.gov.uk

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## 2. Promoting equality and reducing discrimination

An equality impact assessment has been carried out and is attached to this report. There will be no change to how residents physically access and use the site once there so residents will not be negatively impacted by the changes in this way however the number of hours the site is open and available for use will change impacting when the site can be accessed. There is no evidence available to measure what impact this may have.

The reduced opening hours during the week, including a Wednesday closure, may impact residents who work Monday to Friday, however the site is open all day Saturday and Sunday mornings. Residents who do not have flexible start and finish times may not be able to adjust the times they visit the site during the week and the report assumes that it is possible up to 33% of those who use the site currently before 9am or after 4pm and on a Wednesday may not continue to use the site. It is difficult to assess the impact on low income households and whether they are more or less disadvantaged than any other households.

It is acknowledged that the site is best suited to site users who are car drivers due to the health and safety requirements of operating such a site although site staff do their best to accommodate the safe usage by pedestrians and cyclists where possible.

Initiatives to increase the range of recycling materials on site may make disposal of such materials more convenient for all site users.

## 3. Performance management – monitoring and review

Monthly analysis of waste and recycling weights, as well as fly tipping statistics, will continue to be reviewed as part of the monthly contract monitoring meetings.

Staff at the household recycling centre will be involved in feedback on site usage and further face to face consultation with site users will take place during 2023 and 2024.

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## 4. Background

- 4.1. Cheltenham Borough Council funds the provision of the household recycling centre at Swindon Road Cheltenham (operated by Ubico Ltd, a teckal company wholly owned by local authorities). This is a discretionary service and there is no statutory duty on Cheltenham Borough Council to provide it.
- 4.2. This service was last reviewed in June 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic, when the Council approved recommendations to improve the household recycling centre at Swindon

Road for the benefit of residents in Cheltenham. Not only was the site layout optimised, better signage, internal safety barriers and fencing provided but also the bring banks were replaced and the range of recycling materials accepted for both re-use and recycling was also considered. Current opening hours are Monday-Friday 7.30am-7.30pm summer time and 7.30am-6.30pm wintertime, Saturdays 7.30am-4pm and Sundays 9am-12 noon as set out on the website

[https://www.cheltenham.gov.uk/info/5/bins\\_and\\_recycling/919/recycling\\_centres\\_and\\_bring\\_banks](https://www.cheltenham.gov.uk/info/5/bins_and_recycling/919/recycling_centres_and_bring_banks)

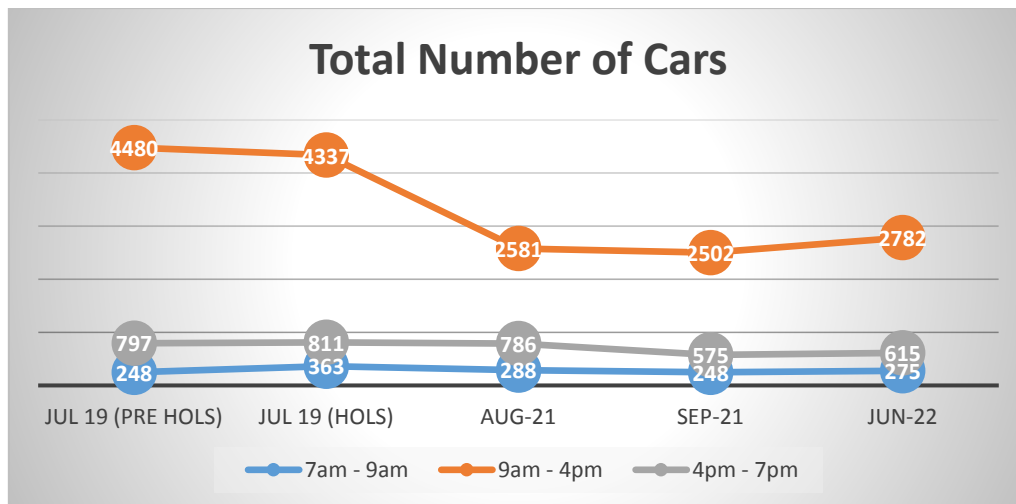
- 4.3. In March 2020 the COVID-19 lockdown required the household recycling centre to close, however, in a short time government guidance confirmed that the household recycling centre could re-open which it did on 11 May 2020 with various safety measures in place. To keep site users and staff safe, Cheltenham increased the number of staff to more safely control activities on site such as the introduction of staff on the entrance slip way and at the main gate and a reduced number of parking bays were available, as well as restricting site users to only Cheltenham residents whereas before members of the public from surrounding districts made use of the Cheltenham owned and funded site. These measures, combined with the impact of COVID-19 on the local community, immediately reduced the number of cars visiting the site on a daily basis. The additional costs incurred during the pandemic have been reduced as the site has returned to normal operations post pandemic. The Environment Agency have inspected the site and complimented Ubico on site safety measures.
- 4.4. Following the pandemic much has changed for residents and the Council, including Brexit and the cost of living crisis which is impacting everyone alike. Given the reduction in site usage and the increasing budget pressures facing the Council it is now appropriate to review CBC's discretionary household recycling centre and its post pandemic usage along with the cost of providing the service to the Council and local taxpayers.
- 4.5. Site usage data (2019-2022) set out in section 5 of the report highlights the reduction in site usage before and after 9am-4pm and there are opportunities to reduce energy consumption (machinery and lighting requirements) if the site was closed, particularly over the winter months when it is dark early morning and early evening. The recommended changes to the opening hours will reduce energy consumption and therefore energy costs to support the climate emergency and budget pressures at the same time. It is estimated that the changes to opening hours will reduce net operating costs by approximately £35,000 per year.
- 4.6. It should also be noted that Gloucestershire County Council's household recycling centres have seen a similar drop in site usage and had already reduced their site opening hours in 2018 - <https://www.gloucestershirerecycle.com/household-recycling-centres-hrcs/your-nearest-recycling-centre/wingmoor-farm-hrc-bishops-cleeve/> therefore these changes would be consistent with the county wide approach to providing a household recycling centre service to residents.
- 4.7. Cheltenham will be actively exploring how the Council can increase the range of recycling materials offered at the site in Swindon Road in line with its innovative approaches to materials such as coffee pods and flexible plastic bags, films and wrapping at the kerbside where the borough was the first local authority to sign up to such initiatives. There is demand for recycling books, paint pots, mattresses, carpet and polystyrene at the site.
- 4.8. The introduction of a wider range of recycling opportunities and waste reduction initiatives will support our ambition to reduce the amount of residual waste disposed of at the site and provide opportunities, with our partners, to promote behaviour change around waste reduction

and re-use as well as recycling. This supports the findings of the House of Lords Environment and Climate Change Committee report published on 12 October 2022 and one of the key messages in this report is “behaviour change is essential for achieving climate and environment goals, and for delivering wider benefits”. The household recycling centre provides an opportunity to achieve this within existing resources.

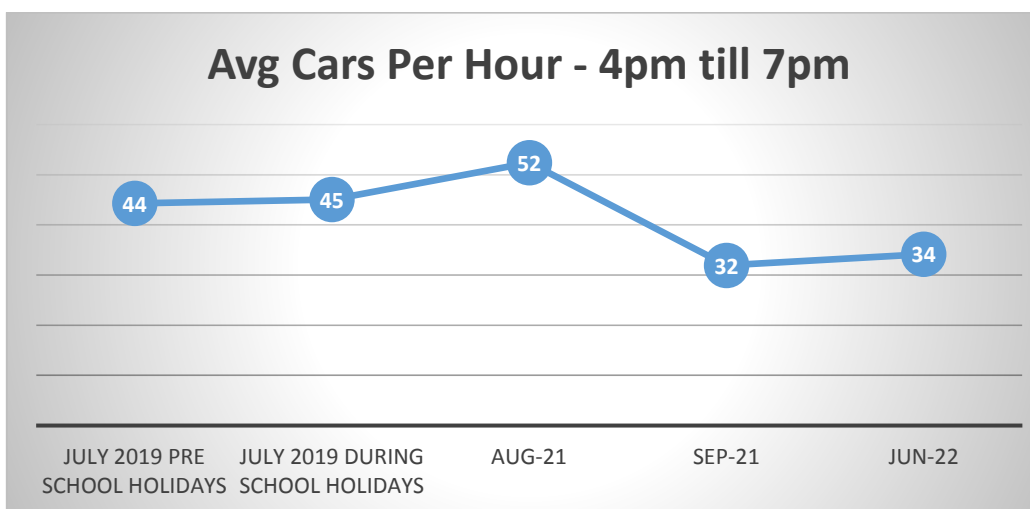
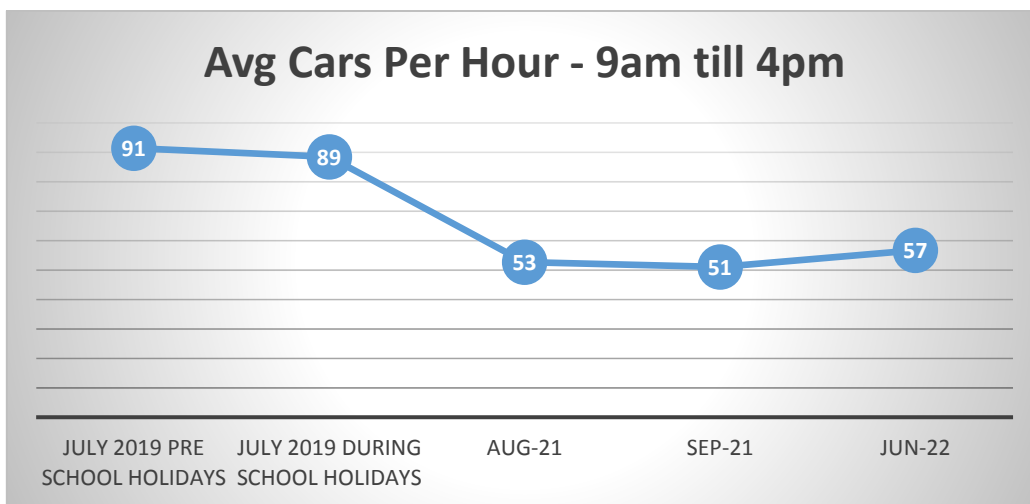
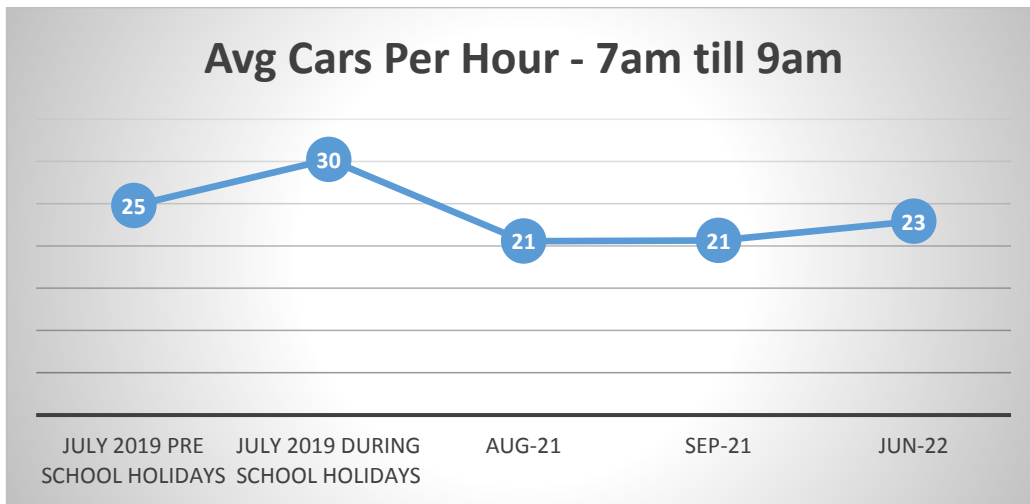
- 4.9. Before the pandemic waste reduction initiatives were planned such as ‘residual waste bag splitting’ – to educate users on reducing black bag waste, and trying to reduce the amount of single use black plastic bags used but it was not possible to progress this with the constraints imposed by COVID. However, waste reduction and increasing re-use and recycling remains a priority for the Council and it therefore wishes to implement these initiatives including the introduction of the first domestic “can take back” scheme for paint and paint pots at the site in conjunction with Crown Paints.

### 5. Reasons for recommendations

- 5.1. As set out in the background to this report, since the site was last reviewed in 2019, much has changed for residents and the Council, including Brexit and the cost of living crisis therefore it is appropriate to review the household recycling centre and its post pandemic usage particularly in light of the significant financial pressures faced by the Council.
- 5.2. Analysis of site usage shown below has demonstrated that the number of site users has reduced since traffic monitoring was first carried out in July 2019:



- 5.3. Further analysis of site usage demonstrates that the highest use of the site occurs between 9am and 4pm whereas earlier in the morning and after 4pm the number of site users is much lower indicating that reducing opening hours to match site usage would disadvantage fewer residents as shown in the graphs below and we would hope many of these residents would be able to visit the site within the new site opening times:

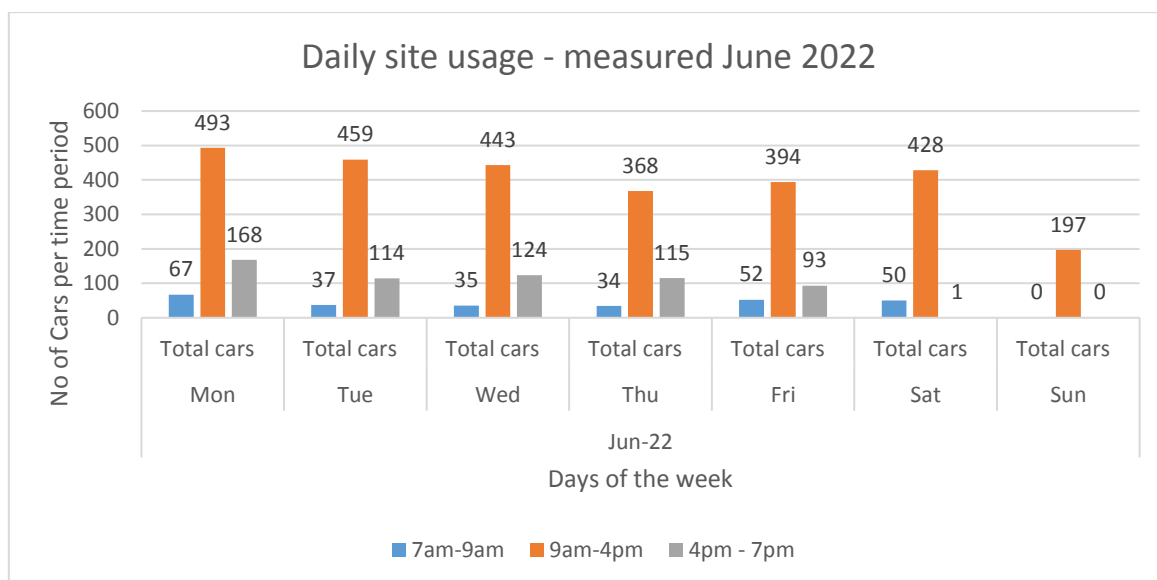


5.4. It is estimated that a financial saving of approximately £35,000 could be achieved per year as a result of the recommendation to reduce the opening hours with effect from 1 February 2023, excluding any financial saving as a result of lowering energy consumption. This figure may vary subject to the amount of waste and recycling that is disposed of at the site in future or is moved to either the kerbside collections or the household recycling centre at Wingmoor and how this impacts income levels for the Council.

5.5. It is assumed that most residents who would normally use the site before 9am or after 4pm, or

on a Wednesday, will use the site during the new opening hours instead although some residents may not. It is difficult to forecast this accurately although an initial assumption has been made that up to 33% may not. The waste hierarchy ranks waste reduction and re-use before recycling and as such the Council is seeking to prioritise greater re-use opportunities in the borough whilst not forgetting the need to maximise the range of materials which can be recycled.

- 5.6. In line with the decision taken by Gloucestershire County Council in August 2018 to reduce opening hours and close all sites for one day per week, including Wingmoor, the site closest to Cheltenham, this report recommends that Cheltenham Borough Council also closes the Swindon Road site one day per week.
- 5.7. Gloucestershire County Council have had positive feedback from site users following the implementation of different opening hours and a site closure for one day a week with no queues at the sites and the booking system introduced is now well liked. The Council will be actively considering the introduction of a booking system during 2023 to reducing queuing vehicles and allow residents quicker, appointment-based access to the site.
- 5.8. The traffic monitoring information as outlined in the graph below demonstrate that Mondays and Tuesdays are the busiest days of the week followed by Wednesdays, the day the Gloucestershire County Council HRC is closed. There is no evidence available to indicate how many of the site users on a Wednesday use Swindon Road that day only because Wingmoor is closed and clearly if the day closure matches that of Wingmoor residents will need to adjust the day of the week they dispose of their recycling and waste.



- 5.9. In 2018 and 2019, officers carried out residual waste bag splitting at the household recycling centre and demonstrated that up to 50% of the contents of the black bags was in fact recycling. This is seen as an important initiative to reduce the amount of residual waste, increase the amount of recycling and promote waste reduction at the site. This initiative was well received by site users at the time and is planned to be introduced at the site within available resources. This will also provide opportunities for further face to face consultation with site users.
- 5.10. In addition, we will seek to work with partners to increase re-use at the household recycle centre and/or at other sites within the borough; increase the range of recycling materials including as many of the materials listed in 4.7 as possible; and signpost site users or provide



as much waste reduction, re-use, recycling and energy reduction information as appropriate.

- 5.11. The Council is already actively seeking to increase re-use and recycling opportunities at the site and is exploring the introduction of the first domestic can take back scheme for paint and paint pots at the site in conjunction with Crown Paints.
- 5.12. Ubico who manage the household recycling centre on behalf of Cheltenham Borough Council have been fully involved in discussions relating to opening hours of the site and the financial impact on the contract sum (annual charge) as required by 8.3 of the contractual agreement with Ubico. A contract variation will be required to update appendix A regarding the reduced opening hours once agreed.

## **6. Alternative options considered**

- 6.1. Officers have considered options for site opening hours including reducing the total site opening hours per week to 32 hours. This option reduced the number of days the site was open to only 5 per week necessitating the site being closed either on a Wednesday and a Sunday providing residents who work during the week less opportunity to access the site at a weekend or closing the site for 2 days during the week and open both days at the weekend. This option was discounted as it was not operationally feasible for staff or for Ubico in covering annual leave or other absences and delivered a lower financial saving for the largest reduction in opening hours.
- 6.2. Gloucestershire County Council have a statutory responsibility to provide household recycling centres. GCC changed the opening hours of their household recycling centres in the autumn of 2018. Their site opening hours changed from 9am-6.15pm all year to 9am-5pm (summer time) and 10am to 4pm (winter time) with the site closest to Cheltenham, Wingmoor, closed on a Wednesday.
- 6.3. The option to mirror the Gloucestershire County Council sites was considered however the staffing levels required to maintain these site opening times presented a similar staffing difficulty as set out in 6.1 above in addition to requiring more staff to cover the hours minimising the financial savings. Due to the operational staffing issues of this option and the minimal financial saving it was discounted.
- 6.4. The option recommended is the closest to the Gloucestershire County Council site opening times as possible, and that which most closely matches the current usage pattern of our site at Swindon Road yet still delivering a financial saving estimated at £35,000 per year.
- 6.5. The introduction of on line booking has been considered and will be reviewed again during 2023 with a view to implementing the service as part of the Council's digital transformation to improve services for customers.

## **7. Consultation and feedback**

- 7.1. The results of public consultation carried out in December 2018 and January 2019 demonstrated support for the household recycling centre service. 92.2% of those who responded to the survey said they would not support a closure of the site and this report does not recommend site closure.
- 7.2. Public consultation on the HRC was undertaken as part of budget consultation, as set out in set out in appendix 3, specifically "Efficiency review of the Household Recycling Centre"  
[http://democracy.cheltenham.gov.uk/documents/s38963/2021\\_12\\_21\\_Interim%20Bud](http://democracy.cheltenham.gov.uk/documents/s38963/2021_12_21_Interim%20Bud)

[get%20Proposals%20for%20General%20Fund\\_appendix%203\\_budget%20savings%20and%20additional%20income.pdf](#) as part of the draft budget report approved by cabinet on 21 December 2021 therefore no additional consultation is considered necessary.

- 7.3. Section 12 of that report said that: *The formal budget consultation on the detailed interim budget proposals will be over the period 22 December 2021 to 26 January 2022. The Cabinet will seek to ensure that the opportunity to have input into the budget consultation process is publicised to the widest possible audience. During the consultation period, interested parties including businesses, tenants, residents, staff and trade unions will be encouraged to comment on the initial budget proposals. They will be asked to identify, as far as possible, how alternative proposals complement the Council's Recovery Strategy and Corporate Plan and how they can be financed. The Budget Scrutiny Working Group and Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be invited to review the interim budget proposals in the meetings scheduled for January 2022 and any comments will be fed back to the Cabinet.*

[http://democracy.cheltenham.gov.uk/documents/s38961/2021\\_12\\_21\\_Interim%20Budget%20Proposals%20for%20General%20Fund\\_report.pdf](http://democracy.cheltenham.gov.uk/documents/s38961/2021_12_21_Interim%20Budget%20Proposals%20for%20General%20Fund_report.pdf)

- 7.4. The report also sets out in section 13 – performance monitoring that: *the scale of future budget savings will require significant work to deliver them within the agreed timescales and there is a danger that this could divert management time from the delivery of services to the delivery of savings. There are regular progress meetings to monitor the delivery of savings and this will need to be matched with performance against the corporate strategy action plan to ensure that resources are used to best effect and prioritised. It is intended that this will be evidenced further in the publication of the MTFS in February 2022. The delivery of the savings work streams included in the interim budget proposals, if approved by full Council will be monitored by the Budget Scrutiny Working Group.*
- 7.5. Full Council, on 21 February 2022, approved the final general fund revenue and capital budget proposals for 2023 which included the results of the public consultation and included a financial savings relating to an efficiency review of the household recycling centre in appendix 4 – budget efficiencies and savings

[https://democracy.cheltenham.gov.uk/documents/s39461/2022\\_02\\_15\\_CAB\\_Appendix%204-%20Budget%20Savings%20and%20Additional%20Income.pdf](https://democracy.cheltenham.gov.uk/documents/s39461/2022_02_15_CAB_Appendix%204-%20Budget%20Savings%20and%20Additional%20Income.pdf)

## 8. Key risks

- 8.1. The key risks are set out in the attached appendix.

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### Report author:

Karen Watson, Environmental Partnerships Manager, [karen.watson@cheltenham.gov.uk](mailto:karen.watson@cheltenham.gov.uk)

### Appendices:

- i. Risk Assessment
- ii. Climate Change Impact Assessment
- iii. Equality Impact Assessment

### Background information:

Cabinet report dated 11 June 2019 – Improvements to the Household Recycling Centre and changes to bring bank sites

GCC Cabinet member decision published 22 August 2018 – changes to household recycling centre opening hours

Final General Fund Revenue and Capital Budget Proposals for 2023, item 12, Council report 21 February 2022

**Appendix 1: Risk Assessment**

Risk ref	Risk description	Risk owner	Impact score (1-5)	Likelihood score (1-5)	Initial raw risk score (1 - 25)	Risk response	Controls / Mitigating actions	Control / Action owner	Deadline for controls/ actions
	If the changes to opening hours acts as a disincentive to residents to use the site for recycling opportunities this will have a negative impact on recycling, forecast savings and financial performance of the site.	Darren Knight	3	3	9	Seek to reduce	Monthly review of waste and recycling weights and income. Annual review of site usage. Seek to reduce risk by increasing the recycling offer on site and monitor closely.	Karen Watson	Quarterly review – on going
	If the changes to opening hours triggers an increase in the volume of waste and recycling material presented at kerbside which exceeds existing capacity, investment in more vehicles and crews is likely and this will outweigh any savings forecast.	Darren Knight	4	3	12	Reduce	Seek to reduce risk by increasing the recycling offer on site to maintain site usage and monitor closely.	Karen Watson	Quarterly review – on going
	Changes to the opening hours may change usage patterns.	Darren Knight	3	3	9	Reduce	Seek to reduce risk by increasing the recycling offer on	Karen Watson	Annual review

Risk ref	Risk description	Risk owner	Impact score (1-5)	Likelihood score (1-5)	Initial raw risk score (1 - 25)	Risk response	Controls / Mitigating actions	Control / Action owner	Deadline for controls/ actions
	This may include more residents travelling to GCC HRC sites out of the borough which may increase carbon emissions						site to maintain site usage.  Introduction of a booking system at Swindon Rd may reduce vehicle queuing and idling which will reduce carbon emissions  Monitor by annual carbon footprint.		

**Guidance for officers (delete once assessment is completed)**

**Risk reference**

If the risk is already on Clearview put in the reference; if not, leave blank until added to Clearview.

**Risk description**

Identify the event or trigger which may generate some new or increased risk to the council. Significant risks which are already identified are recorded on the Clearview and form part of the Corporate Risk Register. Please use *“If xx happens then xx will be the consequence” (cause and effect)*. For example *“If the council’s business continuity planning does not deliver effective responses to the predicted flu pandemic then council services will be significantly impacted.”*

**Risk owner**

Identifying the person who will take responsibility for the overall risk.

**Impact score**

Use the risk management policy scorecard to evaluate the severity of impact(s); enter the highest score you gave:

- 1 - Negligible
- 2 - Minor
- 3 - Moderate
- 4 - Major
- 5 – Critical

### **Likelihood**

Assign a score according to probability, timing or frequency; again enter the highest score you gave:

- 1 – Rare
- 2 - Unlikely
- 3 - Possible
- 4 - Likely
- 5 - Almost Certain

### **Raw risk score**

The initial risk score is the impact score multiplied by the likelihood score. This is called the raw risk score, without any controls in place to mitigate the risk.

### **Risk response**

For each risk identified, a risk response should be identified.

- Reduce the risk
- Accept the risk
- Transfer the risk to a third party
- Avoid the risk
- Prepare a contingent plan
- Share the risk
- Enhance the risk
- Exploit the risk

**Managing the risk: Control/mitigating action**

There are usually things the council can do to reduce either the likelihood or impact of a risky event. Mitigating controls can already be in place, such as budget monitoring. New controls or actions may also be possible, such as agreeing SLA's with partners, or obtaining additional funds.

**Ownership**

Identify the person who will manage/implement the risk controls/actions.

**Deadline**

Put in a deadline for the completion of each control or action