

Cheltenham Borough Council

Officer Decision – Chief Executive

Date of Decision: 21 December 2023

Accountable officer:

Karen Watson, Environmental Partnerships Manager

Ward(s) affected:

All

Key Decision: Yes

Exempt Decision: No

Decision: To implement a booking system for the Household Recycling Centre, Swindon Road to alleviate usage issues which are expected as a result of the GCC Household Recycling Centre closure from 22 January 2024 for a period of up to 3 months

Reasons for the decision:

On 20 December 2022 Cabinet approved changes to the Household Recycling Centre opening hours with effect from 1 February 2023. As part of this decision delegated authority was given to the Director - Place and Communities, in consultation with the cabinet member, waste, recycling and street services, to implement the recommendation which “may include the introduction of a booking system for HRC users”.

Whilst usage at the site has been monitored since the changes to the opening hours in February 2023 were implemented and no significant issues have been identified, there have been occasions where there have been queues of cars and some residents still attending the site after closing hours. Following the closure of the Gloucestershire County Council Household Recycling Centre at Wingmoor Farm on 22 January 2024 there is a risk that a significant increase in the volume of users, both from Cheltenham and outlying areas, will be seen at the site in Swindon Road with no practical means of managing this other than the introduction of a booking system.

The implementation of a booking system in Cheltenham, similar to that of the Gloucestershire County Council booking system which was introduced when services were reopened in 2020 following the COVID-19 closure, will enable Cheltenham residents using the Swindon Road Household Recycling Centre to benefit from the same advantages as those using Wingmoor Farm Household Recycling Centre currently. A booking slot guarantees quick and easy entry to the site reducing the likelihood of queueing or arriving when the site is or is about to close therefore avoiding a wasted trip.

Whilst Gloucestershire County Council benefited from operational efficiencies in terms of scheduling emptying of containers on site because this could be better planned as a result of residents identifying the materials they wanted to dispose of during their visit, the Household Recycling Centre at Swindon Road is smaller and deals with much lower volumes of waste, it is still hoped that some operational efficiencies could be gained from the introduction of booking system.

Alternative options:

Gloucestershire County Council are unable to extend their booking system to include the Household Recycling Centre at Swindon Road because there are too many variations to the sites including different opening hours and waste streams accepted.

Officers do not consider there to be an alternative to alleviate the risk of significant additional volumes of users at Swindon Road after the closure of the Wingmoor Farm Household Recycling Centre in January 2024 without the introduction of a booking system. The County Council have agreed to provide an additional member of staff at Swindon Road and to provide access to an additional driver and vehicle to dispose of the anticipated higher volumes of waste but this will not alleviate the site management issues of significant volumes of additional site users in cars at Swindon Road.

Consultation and feedback:

Officers and members have discussed the need for the Household Recycling Centre booking system before and since the Cabinet decision on 20 December 2022 to vary the opening hours of the site. As part of this decision delegated authority was given to the Director - Place and Communities, in consultation with the cabinet member, waste, recycling and street services, to implement the recommendation which "may include the introduction of a booking system for HRC users". Due to the constraints imposed by COVID-19, Gloucestershire County Council did not carry out any public consultation before implementing their booking system however since the introduction of the booking system they have received very positive public feedback.

Background information:

Cabinet report dated 20 December 2022 – Household Recycling Centre Service Changes
<https://democracy.cheltenham.gov.uk/documents/g3488/Public%20reports%20pack%2020th-Dec-2022%2018.00%20Cabinet.pdf?T=10>

Gloucestershire County Council closure of Wingmoor Farm from 22 January 2024:
<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/latest-news-for-members-from-council-and-partners/household-recycling-centre-to-close-for-repairs-and-improvements/>

Finance Approval:

There are no direct financial implications as a result of this decision other than staff time already budgeted within the establishment. The HRC booking system is being produced in house and not by an external contractor.

Signed: **Andy Taylor, Principal Commercial Accountant** **Date: 19 December 2023**

Interests declared:

None

Signed: **Gareth Edmundson, Chief Executive** **Date: 21 December 2023**