

CABINET MEMBER -COMMITTEE – 31 AUGUST 2011

VAN AND TRAILER PERMIT SCHEME REVIEW

Report by Deputy Director for Environment & Economy (Growth and Infrastructure)

Introduction

1. Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) currently provides eight Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) in Oxfordshire. These are provided for householders to deposit waste free of charge. They are not for the deposit of trade waste by commercial enterprises.
2. The Van and Trailer Permit Scheme was approved by the Cabinet Member for Growth and Infrastructure on 15 July 2010 and introduced on 1 November 2011. The scheme is designed to prevent trade waste from entering the HWRCs whilst not preventing genuine householders from accessing or depositing waste at the HWRCs.
3. This report outlines the detail of the project implementation and reviews the policy.

Policy implementation overview

4. The scheme was successfully implemented on time and under budget. Up to the end of July 2011 approximately 11,000 permits have been issued. It is estimated 15,000 permits will be issued to Oxfordshire householders in total.
5. The scheme provides owners of commercial type vehicles and certain size trailers with a permit for 12 visits. Applicants submit either an electronic or paper form which seeks a declaration from the applicant that they are depositing household waste only.
6. Permit holders can reapply for 12 more visits, every 12 months from the date of issue of their original permit.
7. Technology has meant that permits will not expire and they no longer have to be reissued every 24 months. This will bring cost savings to OCC in the form of postage and stationary and allow householders who only use the HWRCs occasionally to reapply when their visits have all been used.
8. The site operatives have been trained on the scheme and there is continual monitoring of their performance. The operatives have a comprehensive knowledge of the scheme and are using Blackberry devices to record visits.

9. The communications plan started in August 2010 and included banners and flyers at the HWRCs, radio adverts and posters in key locations across Oxfordshire. These communications meant OCC had over 5000 applications prior to the commencement of the scheme in November 2010. The communications throughout have been consistent to ensure all aspects of the scheme are fairly applied to all site users.
10. Waste Management Group received an increased volume of calls during the introduction period from October 2010 to February 2011. These were covered by an assigned administrator. The calls mainly related to how permits were acquired or the reason for the scheme introduction.
11. The call volumes and the number of permit applications peaked in February 2011 following the end of the grace period, which ran from 1 November 2010 to 31 January 2011. There was for a short period of 3 months an increased level of verbal and physical abuse directed at the site operatives. OCC are working to further support the site operatives through training and notification on the OCC stance on abuse. Where possible OCC have contacted those residents who are perpetrators of this abuse and in some circumstances the police have also been contacted.
12. There have been six formal complaints in the first nine months of the scheme. The points raised in these complaints are being addressed as part of the policy review. The number of complaints compared to the number of permits issued is very small and this remains the case.

Flytipping

13. The main concern expressed during the introduction of the permit scheme was that an increase in flytipping would occur. However, this does not appear to be the case so far.
14. Fly Capture data, which is provided by the Waste Collection Authorities (WCA) to the Environment Agency, for November 2010 to March 2011, shows a decrease in the amount of flytipping across the county, when compared to the same time period the year before. There has been a decrease of over 350 flytipping incidents.
15. OCC supported an Oxfordshire Waste Partnership anti flytipping campaign during the scheme introduction. We continue to monitor the situation and work closely with the WCA enforcement officers.

Financial costs and savings of scheme implementation

16. The Van and Trailer Permit Scheme cost £36,000 to implement and £21,000 to administer to mid August 2011. The scheme had an initial £100,000 budget for implementation. There will be an additional cost to administer the scheme until 31 October 2011 of £5,000, therefore, there is an under spend of £38,000. The under spend is due to the type of technology adopted.

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17. The amount of correspondence and staffing time has reduced now that the scheme has settled down; there will be ongoing administration costs of £20,000 per annum.
18. All eight of the HWRCs have seen reductions in the amount of waste deposited and lower levels of congestion on the sites.
19. The tonnage data from November 2010 to June 2011 shows reductions of approximately 1,600 tonnes of inert waste, 1,100 tonnes of landfill waste and 1,200 tonnes of compostable waste. This equates to savings up to £250,000 per annum.
20. The number of vehicles visiting the HWRCs has reduced on average by 14%. This means it is now easier to access HWRCs and the containers, along with less time spent queuing.
21. The data analysed has taken into account the WCA service changes for kerbside collections. There is presently no evidence to show a shift of the waste in to householders' bins and, therefore, no additional collection cost to the WCA.

Policy changes

22. The scheme was designed to encompass all the site users of HWRCs; it was acknowledged from the outset that the policy would need a review. OCC built-in a review period to take on board comments and suggestions received during the introduction period. This provided an opportunity to address any concerns raised and amend, where appropriate, the policy to reflect other council policies and public concerns.
23. There are a number of suggested improvements and changes to the policy provided by members of the public, Waste Management Group officers and other key stakeholders such as Oxfordshire Waste Partnership Operations and Environmental Quality and Cleanliness Group officers and HWRC contractors. Consultation on the review recommendations has not taken place as the amendments impact upon operational aspects of the policy.
24. It is hoped that the scheme will move towards a paperless system with further utilisation of the Blackberry devices on the HWRCs. There are synergies that can be developed by incorporating the scheme into a central customer service base; these are being explored by the Waste Management Group and the Customer Service Centre.

Recommendations

25. Annexes 1 to 3 set out suggested changes to the Van and Trailer Permit Scheme and a recommendation for approval, rejection, or further investigation for each idea has been considered.

26. There are key areas of the policy that required clarification, e.g. how the policy applies to taxis, trailer bed lengths, use of ramps on site and mini buses.
27. The key change recommended relates to the registration of more than one vehicle against a trailer permit. Recommendations for areas of further investigation are use of the sites by non Oxfordshire residents and the onsite issuing of permits.
28. Timescales where applicable are noted against each suggestion. The final policy extension document will be agreed through the Cabinet Member for Growth & Infrastructure at a later date.

Financial and staff Implications of the policy changes

29. There are no immediate financial implications due to the policy changes or clarifications.
30. The recommendation to investigate options further will result in the production of a business case to assess their viability. OCC will also produce a business case for the scheme to become paperless; this could result in cost savings and substantial environmental payback.
31. The current staffing arrangements within OCC are deemed sufficient to cover the policy changes or clarifications and it is anticipated the number of calls or queries will be relatively small. A paperless system would reduce the staffing requirements.

Conclusion

32. The Van and Trailer Permit Scheme has been successfully introduced with the scheme costing less to implement than originally budgeted and producing significant savings. The scheme has not caused an increase in fly tipping and the number of complaints has been low. OCC have listened to the site users and are now looking to address some of the suggestions raised through this review process. There is a need to further explore and utilise technology and the OCC Customer Service Centre to the best effect.

RECOMMENDATION

It is RECOMMENDED that the Cabinet Member for Growth & Infrastructure:

- (a) **approve the detailed amendments to the Van and Trailer Permit Scheme as set out in Annex 1 to this report;**
- (b) **conducts a second review of the Scheme scheduled for September 2012.**

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MARTIN TUGWELL

Deputy Director for Environment & Economy (Growth and Infrastructure)

Background papers: Van and Trailer Permit Scheme Policy

Contact Officer: Amy Howard, Waste Contracts Officer: 01865 815349
amy.howard@oxfordshire.gov.uk

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