

CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT – 13 NOVEMBER 2014

VAN AND TRAILER PERMIT SCHEME THIRD REVIEW (VAN AND TRAILER E-PERMIT SCHEME)

Report by Deputy Director for Environment & Economy (Commercial)

Introduction

1. Oxfordshire County Council (the Council) currently provides seven Household Waste Recycling Centres across Oxfordshire. These are provided for Oxfordshire householders/residents to dispose of household waste free of charge (with the exception of certain items of DIY waste and tyres which they are charged for). The sites are not for the deposit of commercial waste produced as a result of any commercial activity.
2. The Van and Trailer Permit Scheme was specifically introduced to make sure that only household waste is deposited at the Household Waste Recycling Centres. Customers wishing to visit the Household Waste Recycling Centres with either a 'commercial-type' vehicle or a trailer between 1.8m (6 ft) and 3m (10 ft) long can apply for a free permit for a specified number of visits, allowing them access but preventing traders from entering the Household Waste Recycling Centres. The scheme was approved by the Cabinet Member for Growth and Infrastructure at a Delegated Decisions meeting on 15 July 2010 and was formally introduced on 1 November 2010.
3. This report is the third review of the scheme and outlines progress to date (notably the introduction of a 'paperless' system known as Van Trailer e-permit) with recommendations going forward.
4. The policy may be read in conjunction with the Household Waste Recycling Centres - Operating, Access and Waste Acceptance Policy

Progress to date

5. Oxfordshire continues to have the best recycling rate in the country, with a county wide recycling rate of nearly 60% for 2013/14. We are also very good at not producing waste and for 2013/14 had the lowest 'waste arisings' per person of any county.
6. There remains no evidence to link the scheme with fly tipping and the Waste Management Group works closely with other local authorities to monitor this.
7. The total number of permits approved since the schemes inception is in excess of 29,000. There are currently over 19,000 live permits (which equates to just over 7% of households in Oxfordshire). Only 7.5% of customers have

used all 12 visits allotted to a permit, which shows that this threshold is appropriate and allows householders enough visits.

Van and Trailer e-Permit Scheme

8. When the permit scheme was reviewed in 2012 a recommendation to move towards a 'paperless' scheme was agreed. This updated system, known as the Van Trailer e-permit scheme, is due to become operational at the beginning of November 2014.

Key changes:

- Paper permits will no longer be issued or required.
- Customers are able to check how many visits they have left online, by asking site staff or by contacting Waste Management Group.
- Permits will be automatically renewed after 12 months and are reset with 12 visits – customers will no longer need to contact Waste Management Group to renew their permits.
 - Permits automatically expire if they have not been used for 24 months – customers will receive a notification prior to the expiry of the permit.

Implementation:

9. Existing customer information will be transferred into the new system prior to it going live (planned for Tuesday 04 November 2014). Customers who have supplied email addresses will receive an automatically generated message confirming that the system has been updated, that their details have been transferred to the new system and that they no longer need to take their paper permit with them to the Household Waste Recycling Centre. Customers that had not provided an e-mail address will be contacted via letter.
10. Customers will still be able to apply for a permit online. Customers without internet or e-mail can still contact the Waste Management Group for an application form and a letter confirming the approval of the permit will be provided.
11. Paper permits will no longer be issued to customers.
12. On visiting a Household Waste Recycling Centre, the customer will either give site staff their permit number or vehicle registration. Site staff in turn will input the information into one of the on-site Blackberry's linked to the new system which will trigger an automated message to be sent to the customers e-mail address thanking them for visiting and informing them how many visits remain on their permit.
13. All customers will be able to check how many visits they have left by inputting their permit number or registration details at www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/vantrailerpermits, by asking site staff or by contacting the Waste Management Group on 01865 816043.

Financial savings and staff implications

14. As a result of decreasing visits and tonnage, savings during 2013 – 2014 of £350,000 can be attributable to the Van and Trailer Permit Scheme.
15. It is anticipated the transition to Van Trailer e-Permits will result in additional savings in the region of £9,000 per annum.
16. Although the change to the system is expected to result in a higher volume of calls and customer queries initially, the resource allocated to administer the scheme ultimately is anticipated to reduce from 0.35 Full Time Equivalent to 0.2 Full Time Equivalent.
17. The enhanced e-Permit scheme, therefore, will bring significant benefits to the Council; realising time and cost savings through the reduction in manual administration of the preceding paper based permit scheme.

Customer satisfaction

18. From January 2014 to date there have been only 3 complaints recorded about the scheme. The number of complaints compared to the number of permits issued is evidence of the scheme's continued success. Where appropriate, proposals raised in these complaints have been considered as part of this review.
19. Customer satisfaction surveys are carried out annually at the Household Waste Recycling Centres. The most recent surveys carried out in October 2013 at all seven Household Waste Recycling Centres show a very high percentage of overall satisfaction across a number of categories.
20. Customers with a permit were specifically asked if they had any comments about the scheme. Only one customer complained that it did not allow them to tow a trailer with a commercial-type vehicle. Most customers reported that they found the scheme easy to use and that it had not restricted their ability to use the Household Waste Recycling Centres.
21. In the future, Waste Management Group will continue to carry out annual customer surveys in order to gather feedback to meet the Council's customer satisfaction key performance indicator relating to customer satisfaction at Household Waste Recycling Centres. This will also include questions on the Van and Trailer e-Permit Scheme so that Waste Management Group can monitor and ensure ease of use of the scheme for customers, and to obtain further feedback. An online feedback form and on site comments cards are also permanently available.
22. The e-Permit scheme will bring significant benefits to customers as it will improve the service offered to the customer and simplify the administration of permits by officers. The potential for discrepancy and dispute due to a mismatch between the old paper permit and the council's updated e-Permit system will be eradicated; the customer will no longer need to worry about

losing a paper permit and the system is able to automatically update customers by email with their usage and current balance.

Conclusion

23. The Van and Trailer Permit Scheme in essence works well as an established and successful system. The updated Van Trailer e-permit system will build on this and generate resource savings as well as providing a more user friendly service for customers and officers. The updated policy can be seen at Annex 1 with Policy amendments described at Annex 2.
24. Terms and conditions have been amended to both remove clauses that no longer apply and reword as necessary and re-ordered to a logical sequence. The updated Terms and Conditions can be seen at Annex 3.
25. The Council will continue to listen to the site users and seek to address and implement where possible suggestions raised through this review process. Legislation states that the Council cannot restrict residents' entitlement to bring household waste to a Household Waste Recycling Centre. The Van and Trailer Permit scheme has, however, restricted the opportunities for potential and actual abuse of the sites.

RECOMMENDATION

26. **The Cabinet Member for Environment is RECOMMENDED to:**
 - (a) **approve the Van and Trailer e-Permit scheme as a continuing and effective method for policing the Household Waste Recycling Centres in order to prevent trade waste from entering;**
 - (b) **approve the amendments to the Van and Trailer e-Permit Scheme as set out in Annex 2 to this report;**
 - (c) **approve the updated terms and conditions in Annex 3 to this report;**
 - (d) **allow the Deputy Director for Environment & Economy (Commercial) in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment to make minor textual changes and amendments to the Van and Trailer e-Permit scheme from time to time for the purposes of clarification or, as the case may be, where necessary to comply with changes to applicable legislation, guidance or policy**
 - (e) **to conduct a further review of the scheme within 3 years from the date of this report.**

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Background papers: Household Waste Recycling Centres - Operating, Access and Waste Acceptance Policy

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