

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**Report**

Committee:	Economy, Transport and Environment Select Committee
Date:	30 October 2015
Title:	Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) 2015 Changes in Opening Hours
Reference:	7029
Report From:	Director of Economy, Transport and Environment

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1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. The purpose is to report on the impacts of the decision taken on 20 January 2015 by the Executive Member for Economy, Transport and Environment to revise opening hours at Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) sites – the change being implemented on 01 April 2015¹.
- 1.2. This is as per the terms of the January Decision, which required that “the Economy, Transport and Environment Select Committee be requested to review the impact of the changes in due course”.
- 1.3. In particular, the report will consider the impact of the changes according to the following criteria:
 - Site User Feedback
 - Visitor Numbers & Tonnages
 - Fly-Tipping
 - Site Management
 - Site Servicing

2. Contextual Information

- 2.1. The decision taken was to reduce opening hours at all 24 HWRC sites, by opening one hour later each day of the week, and closing one hour earlier in the summer. As such, opening hours from 01 April 2015 have been as follows:
 - Summer (1 April – 30 September) – 9am – 6pm
 - Winter (1 October – 28 February) – 9am – 4pm

¹ 20 January 2015 Decision:

http://www3.hants.gov.uk/councilmeetings/advsearchmeetings/meetingsitemsummary.htm?sta=&pref=Y&item_ID=6369&tab=1&co=&confidential=

Spring (1 March – 31 March) – 9am – 5pm

- 2.2. The only exception to the above is Efford HWRC (nr. Lymington) where due to planning restrictions the site closes at 4:30pm during the Spring and Summer periods (This has meant that, in percentage terms, reducing opening hours in the morning during Spring and Summer has had a greater impact at Efford than at other sites).
- 2.3. The intended saving resulting from this action is circa £180k per annum in reduced management costs.

3. Summary

3.1. The following are the key findings from the report:

- a) As of 30 September 2015, 125 complaints had been received following the change in opening hours. The majority (55%) related to levels of queuing and congestion on sites. The remaining complaints covered a number of other areas, which are detailed in Section 4.
- b) Three sites in particular (Basingstoke, Efford, Farnborough) were highlighted as having congestion issues via complaints received. These three sites vary to a reasonable degree in size, visitor numbers and tonnage.
- c) An HWRC Site User Survey carried out in June 2015 identified that less than half of site users were aware of the change to opening hours, and a further 70% of them did not feel that they had been affected by the change.
- d) The period immediately following the change to opening hours on 01 April 2015 is a peak time of year for HWRC usage. However, visitor numbers were slightly reduced compared to the same period for 2014, and waste volume data recorded via WasteDataFlow² shows that overall tonnage was also slightly reduced at Hampshire's HWRC Sites.
- e) There is no discernible evidence that the change to Opening Hours has led to an increase in fly-tipping in the short term (in fact data recorded via Fly Capture³ shows that fly-tipping across the County between April and June 2015 was down by over 2% compared with the same period in 2014). It is however recommended that longer term trends are monitored.
- f) The contractor responsible for HWRC site management has noted that the change has had negative impacts upon their ability to manage sites, and identified negative impacts for local businesses and residents associated with congestion issues.
- g) The contractors responsible for servicing and haulage of waste from HWRC sites reported no negative impacts upon site-servicing as a result of the change.

² <http://www.wastedataflow.org/>

³ <https://flycapture.environment-agency.gov.uk/flycapture/login.jsp;jsessionid=CYFYWJTD0KkNFJlzfhyM36nYQ5D2wxlCwXQpdd23cfQDTfbhjh8!93385122>

- 3.2. While the change to opening hours has resulted in some queuing and congestion at particular sites; nothing has arisen which suggests a requirement to review the decision to reduce hours in support of the requirement for ongoing savings and efficiencies.
- 3.3. The County Council will continue to monitor congestion issues outside the Basingstoke, Efford and Farnborough sites and seek any opportunities to improve management of traffic flow, reducing congestion on nearby roads and any associated risks of an accident occurring.
- 3.4. The general feedback received from both site users and the Management Contractor is that an earlier start to opening hours would be preferable. The levels of queues and congestion outside sites have not been caused by an increase in visitor numbers and tonnage, and queues have been forming in advance of the 09:00 opening hour at sites.
- 3.5. The County Council will continue to monitor longer term trends with regards to fly-tipping as a result of this and other future decisions with regards to the HWRC Service, so as to gain a wider understanding of this issue.

4. Site User Feedback

- 4.1. In total, 125 complaints about the change in Opening Hours have been received by the Waste & Resource Management Team (as of October 2015). The majority of these have come via Hantsdirect, while a smaller number have been received via Elected Members, and in one case a local MP.
- 4.2. The most complaints were received in the weeks directly following Bank Holiday weekends (namely Easter and the Spring Bank Holiday), which are traditionally busy periods for HWRC sites. It is of no surprise, based on historic data, that these were times where long queues were influenced by peak demand to use sites – a problem likely intensified, by the recent change in opening hours.
- 4.3. Of the 125 complaints, 122 related to a specific HWRC site. 17 of the 24 HWRC sites were specifically highlighted in complaints – the following sites were those were mentioned most often:

HWRC Site	Number of Complaints
Basingstoke HWRC	38
Farnborough HWRC	22
Efford HWRC	20
Havant HWRC	9
All other HWRC sites	0-5 each

- 4.4. Each of these sites is known to have experienced particular issues with queuing during busy periods this summer, often to the extent that the queues extend out of sites and began to impact on the local road network.

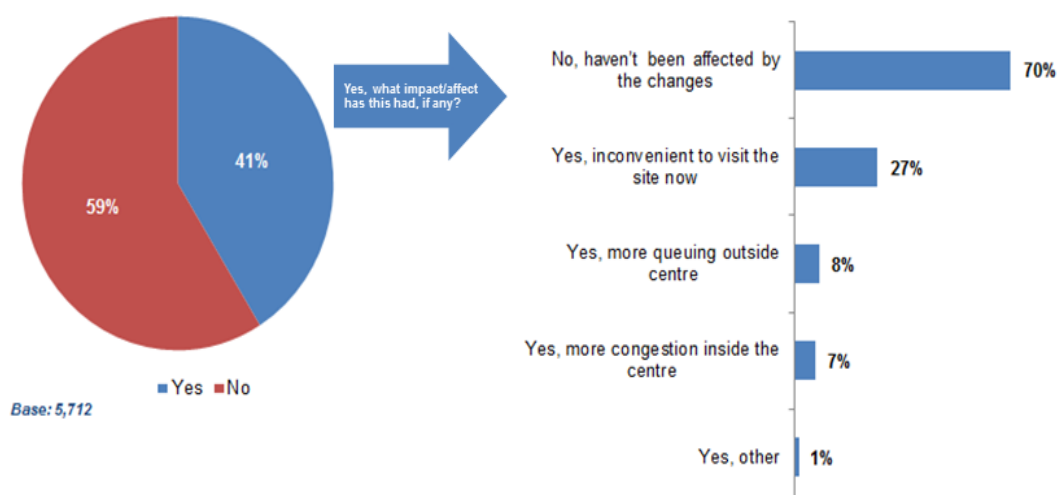
- 4.5. In Basingstoke and Farnborough some complaints were also received from local residents or people who work in the area, for whom the queues were significantly impacting upon their ability to make their regular journeys.
- 4.6. Complaints were received from local employers, in the vicinity of Basingstoke and Farnborough HWRCs, who were concerned about customers being put off using them because of queues, their staff being late for work, or about deliveries to and from their premises being delayed, with direct negative impacts upon their business.
- 4.7. At the Basingstoke, Efford and Farnborough sites, concerns were also raised with regards to dangerous behaviour from vehicles seeking to pass or overtake queues to carry on with unrelated journeys, with the fear that an accident could be caused. These concerns were taken particularly seriously - site staff at all three HWRCs were encouraged to do all they could to help keep visitors moving through sites and reduce the congestion impacting upon local roads. No incidents were reported.
- 4.8. In the case of Efford HWRC, a number of residents raised the additional complaint that the loss of one hour at the start of the day has a greater impact on that site than any other, due to the fact that it already closes earlier than all other sites in summertime.
- 4.9. The specific issues raised by complainants were as follows:

Reason for complaint	Number of Complaints
Queues/congestion	69
Pref. for old hrs	24
Mix of all	18
Publicity	9
Reason for change	2
Fly-tipping	3

- 4.10. Queuing time and congestion were the most common cause for complaint, again with particular correlation to the frequently highlighted Basingstoke, Efford and Farnborough sites. It was regularly suggested that queues were longer than had been experienced previously at HWRC sites, with waiting times of up to an hour. Anecdotal evidence from site staff (see Section 7) is consistent with this.
- 4.11. Those who identified a preference for the previous opening hours particularly wished to point out that the former arrangements were more suitable for their working routines, creating an opportunity to visit sites before the start of their working days.
- 4.12. Some residents noted that, with their working days finishing at 17:30, they would at times struggle to visit sites before the 18:00 closing time. Many complainants pointed out that previously they had preferred to visit sites prior to 09:00 to avoid any queues that might form later in the day.
- 4.13. Fly-tipping was infrequently the specific reason for complaint, but often was brought up by correspondents as a potential consequence of the change to

opening hours. In Section 6, evidence is provided to suggest that, in the short term, there has been no increase in fly-tipping across Hampshire.

- 4.14. Additional customer feedback was gathered via an HWRC Site Survey that was carried out in June 2015, where an average of 200 visitors per site (including both weekday and weekend visitors) were asked to feedback on a number of issues (including but not limited to opening hours) via a face-to-face survey. Of those surveyed, only 41% were aware of the change to opening hours.
- 4.15. When these visitors who were aware of the change were asked what impact or affect this has had on them visiting the HWRC's, 70% (which equates to 29% of total sample) said they have not been affected. Just over a quarter (27%) said that it is inconvenient to visit the site now, 8% felt there was more queuing outside the centre and 7% said the site was more congested (they were allowed to select multiple answers). The graphs below demonstrate the full results.



5. Visitor Numbers & Tonnages

- 5.1. As suggested in the above section, there is anecdotal evidence from customer feedback (as well as from the Management Contractor) to suggest that there has been congestion and queues outside some HWRC sites since the change to opening hours.
- 5.2. As noted, the most significant queues were observed at Basingstoke, Efford and Farnborough HWRCs, with anecdotal evidence from visitors and site staff stating that at times queues built up in advance of opening time, leading to waiting times of over an hour, and did not fully subside at any time during the day.
- 5.3. Analysis of visitor numbers, based on data from the Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) cameras on sites (which register each different number plate as a 'count') suggests that visitor numbers, while relatively high in the months from April to June 2015 (covering a traditional peak time for visitors), were in fact slightly down overall compared to the equivalent period of time in 2014. On average, visitor numbers were down by approximately 3% at HWRC sites across the network.

- 5.4. Similarly, there was a reduction in tonnages of waste received by sites over the same period.

6. Fly-Tipping

- 6.1. A number of residents expressed concerns (normally as part of wider complaints), that the change in opening hours and associated queues could lead to increased fly-tipping locally.
- 6.2. However, analysis of the three months immediately following the change in opening hours (April-June '15) in comparison with the equivalent three month period in 2014, suggests that across the county there was an overall fall in instances of fly-tipping, by over 2%.
- 6.3. This three month period again coincides with times of peak demand to use the HWRC sites.

7. Impact upon Site Management

- 7.1. Hopkins Recycling Limited (HRL) currently manage all 24 sites on a contractual basis (until 31 March 2016). Their direct feedback, with regards to the impact of the change in opening hours upon their ability to successfully manage sites, was thus sought and received. It is summarised below:

Longer queues at opening time. Long queues are already in place before sites open at 09:00 (often forming from around 08:00) and this causes ongoing queuing throughout the day, particularly in the mornings, leaving little/no opportunity for the sites to catch up.

Ongoing complaints and issues due to the site opening time coinciding with business start times. This means that both site staff and the public getting to work are stuck in congestion caused by queues outside of sites. This creates a potential Health and Safety risk as people get frustrated and try to circumvent the queues and queuing builds onto the major highways. Additionally this has a potential liable impact on the ability for some businesses to operate and their customers to access their premises.

There are no longer peak periods of activity; the peak lasts most/all of the day. This has impacted upon staff break times due to the constant flow of traffic and customers through the site. Site staff frequently comment that they feel under considerable pressure since the change, and that the lack of any trough times to conduct other needed work activities is unmanageable. Additionally, they are still having to journey to work at the same time as they did prior to the change in opening hours, to avoid also being stuck in rush hour traffic and queues to access sites.

Reduced opening hours, combined with queues outside sites, limit the ability of the haulage contractor to access HWRC sites and service bins in a timely manner. Specifically this impacts the HWRC service as follows:

The haulage contractor can be delayed in its first daily services of HWRC bins because of having to wait in the public queues to access the sites. This means that the first servicing of bins is often delayed and the haulage contractor then having to struggle to catch up throughout the day.

On single level HWRC sites, or any other sites where bin servicing is conducted in public areas – which requires temporary closure of the sites - servicing of bins in the morning can lead to further queues building up over and above those that have already formed in advance of opening time.

Where the haulage contractor falls behind, this leads to bins for recyclable materials becoming full and unusable. As a consequence such materials may instead be placed in the Amenity Waste bins and not be recycled or be turned away from the site. This has a negative impact on site management and recycling performance.

- However, the last hour of summer opening hours ie between 5pm and 6pm appears to have little attraction to the public due to its coincidence with rush hour. (The impact of the new winter hours has yet to be assessed).
- 7.2. HRL have made it clear that, whilst they understand the decision to reduce opening hours at HWRC sites, they have a clear preference for opening and closing sites one hour earlier than currently, i.e. opening hours from 08:00-17:00 as opposed to 0900-18:00 in summertime, and opening hours from 08:00-15:00 during the winter months.
- 7.3. HRL are of the belief that this option would be preferable as it would reduce the impact of significant queues forming in the morning, and help to relieve operational pressures. In turn they are of the belief that this would help to reduce queues at weekends if people could visit sites prior to 09:00 during the working week.
- 7.4. HRL suggest that anecdotal feedback they have received from customers at sites supports their preferred approach / opening hours. This is somewhat backed up by some of the feedback received from customers in Section 4.

8. Impact upon Bin Servicing

- 8.1. Despite some of the concerns raised above by HRL with regards to operational issues caused by the change to Opening Hours, Veolia UK, as the party responsible for servicing of bins and haulage, reported no concerns or negative impacts resulting from the change.

9. Conclusions

- 9.1. While the change to opening hours has had some negative consequences, particularly with regards to queuing and congestion on a localised basis, nothing has arisen that would justify overturning the decision to reduce hours in order to support ongoing savings and efficiencies.
- 9.2. However, it can also be concluded that the change to opening hours has had some impact on levels of queuing and congestion, which is not directly associated with increased visitor numbers and waste.
- 9.3. The County Council will continue to monitor congestion issues outside the Basingstoke, Efford and Farnborough sites and seek any opportunities to improve management of traffic flow, reducing congestion on nearby roads and associated risks of an accident occurring.

- 9.4. The general feedback received from both site users and the Management Contractor is that an earlier start to opening hours would be preferable. The levels of queues and congestion outside sites have not been caused by an increase in visitor numbers and tonnage, and queues have been forming in advance of the 09:00 opening hour at sites.
- 9.5. The County Council will also continue to monitor longer term trends with regards to fly-tipping as a result of this and other future decisions with regards to the HWRC Service, so as to gain a wider understanding of this issue.

CORPORATE OR LEGAL INFORMATION:**Links to the Corporate Strategy**

Hampshire safer and more secure for all:	no
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
Maximising well-being:	no
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
Enhancing our quality of place:	yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	

Other Significant Links

Links to previous Member decisions:		
<u>Title</u> Changes to the Household Waste Recycling Centres Hours of Operation	<u>Reference</u> 6421	<u>Date</u> 20 January 2015
Direct links to specific legislation or Government Directives		
<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>	

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

<u>Document</u>	<u>Location</u>
None	

IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:

1. Equality Duty

1.1. The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act;
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:

- a) The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant characteristic connected to that characteristic;
- b) Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- c) Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

1.2. Equalities Impact Assessment:

Impact assessments are undertaken in advance of any formal executive decision. Information about those impact assessments, including equalities and impact on crime and disorder and on climate change, will be set out in the appendices to the relevant decision making reports. This report is an update to the Select Committee and is not proposing any change or decision, therefore impact assessments have not been undertaken.

2. Impact on Crime and Disorder:

2.1. Impact assessments are undertaken in advance of any formal executive decision. Information about those impact assessments, including equalities and impact on crime and disorder and on climate change, will be set out in the appendices to the relevant decision making reports. This report is an update to the Select Committee and is not proposing any change or decision, therefore impact assessments have not been undertaken.

3. Climate Change:

3.1. How does what is being proposed impact on our carbon footprint / energy consumption?

3.2. How does what is being proposed consider the need to adapt to climate change, and be resilient to its longer term impacts?

Impact assessments are undertaken in advance of any formal executive decision. Information about those impact assessments, including equalities and impact on crime and disorder and on climate change, will be set out in the appendices to the relevant decision making reports. This report is an update to the Select Committee and is not proposing any change or decision, therefore impact assessments have not been undertaken.