

Urgent Decision Taken on Behalf of Cabinet

**Report to the Leader of the County Council and the Cabinet Member for
Technical Services, Rural Affairs and Waste Management**
Report submitted by: Head of Service - Waste

Part I

Electoral Division affected:
(All Divisions);

Recycling Centre Access and Inert Waste Policies

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Executive Summary

In line with the key dates introduced as part of the Government's coronavirus roadmap, plans have been developed to make changes to operating practices, and lift certain restrictions, that were introduced as a result of the co-vid pandemic to provide for the safe operation of the council's recycling centres.

In order to deliver these plans whilst continuing to maintain the safest possible conditions for staff and customers, temporary changes are proposed to the council's Access and Inert Waste policies.

Reason for Urgency

This decision is urgent and cannot await the next meeting of Cabinet on 1 April 2021. The reason for this is to facilitate the wider plan for lifting restrictions at recycling centres and enable the return of inert waste facilities at recycling centres at the earliest opportunity, such that residents can take advantage of them during the spring weather, and such that several changes can be communicated collectively in advance. The Inert Waste and Access policies are linked in this respect. This decision is therefore being taken on behalf of Cabinet by the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Technical Services, Rural Affairs and Waste Management in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order C16(1).

Recommendation

The Leader of the County Council and the Cabinet Member for Technical Services, Rural Affairs and Waste Management are asked to approve that:

- (i) Current arrangements for vans and trailers using recycling centres, introduced as a result of co-vid operations, be maintained until such time as a revised Access Policy is approved by Cabinet.

- (ii) Temporary changes be adopted to the council's Inert Waste Policy to enable the reintroduction of inert waste facilities at the earliest opportunity.

This decision should be implemented immediately for the purposes of Standing Order C29 as any delay could adversely affect the execution of the county council's responsibilities. The reason for this is set out in the report.

Background and Advice

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic a number of changes were made to the operation of the council's recycling centres in order to manage the safe social distancing of staff and customers. Plans have been developed to lift some of the restrictions that were put in place in conjunction with the milestone dates announced by Government in its coronavirus roadmap.

To do this in the safest and most efficient way possible, it has been identified that two of the council's recycling centre policies, the Access and Inert Waste policies, should be amended temporarily until such time as a full review can be completed for consideration by Cabinet.

Access Policy

The Access Policy governs the use of recycling centres by certain vehicles including vans and trailers. The general principle of the policy is to reduce congestion and improve safety, given the carrying capacity and manoeuvrability of these vehicle types. The policy also helps to reduce the potential for commercial waste to be delivered illegally.

Upon re-opening recycling centres following the first lockdown these vehicles were excluded from the facilities due to concerns over congestion. Upon reintroduction, customers wishing to visit using a van or a trailer became subject to the need to make an appointment to visit. Customers are able to book one appointment/visit per calendar month. This has helped to control the number of vans and trailers visiting at any one time and reduced queueing times for customers. It should be noted that upon introduction of the appointment system the requirement was extended to customers using single axle trailers. Previously, only twin axle trailers were restricted by the Access Policy.

The Access Policy required customers using these vehicles to obtain a permit which was in paper format, posted to the customers address and presented to staff on arrival. The move to an appointment system also removed the need for personal contact between customers and staff and subsequent handling of documentation, providing a safer operation by reducing the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

As part of the council's digital first agenda work is underway to improve the software and data systems used to manage the appointment system, which were initially developed as an urgent measure. These improvements will replace paper permits with a digital solution. The systems development may also ultimately influence the wording or detail of any revised policy and accordingly this should also be completed before the policy is formally amended.

To return to a paper-based permit system until such time as a revised policy is in place, and a subsequent return to appointments thereafter, would be confusing to customers. It is therefore recommended that the current arrangements for vans and trailers visiting the recycling centres remain in place upon lifting of other restrictions until such time that a revised policy is approved.

Inert Waste Policy

The Inert Waste Policy restricts the amount of inert waste customers can bring to a recycling centre. The policy allows the flexibility for customers to deliver more than this amount by payment for additional quantities. The policy is operated using a paper-based permit system similar to the access policy.

Acceptance of inert waste was totally suspended as a result of measures for safe covid operations and inert waste has not been accepted at the recycling centres since re-opening following the initial lockdown. The reasons for this were that on some facilities inert waste skips were removed to facilitate queuing and stacking of vehicles. In addition, the paper-based delivery of the policy, which involved scrutiny and signing of permits, was not considered safe in respect of potential COVID-19 transmission. Over the course of the last year customers have been advised to store inert waste safely at home until such time as the facilities are able to accept it again.

The Waste service now believes facilities for inert waste can be safely reintroduced subject to some amendments to the policy. It is proposed that the restriction on the quantity of inert waste that can be delivered by customers is removed for customers delivering waste in standard domestic vehicles. Those delivering inert waste in vans or trailers can do so in line with the revised Access Policy, once per month and by appointment. Accordingly, any charging for the delivery of inert waste will be suspended and the requirement to obtain a permit temporarily removed.

These changes will allow customers who have stored waste at home to bring this waste whilst still allowing for delivery of any additional waste generated this spring. They also remove the need for documents to be checked and change hands. Measures will be utilised to monitor any excessive usage in order to prevent the delivery of commercial waste.

Alongside the Access Policy work is underway to develop digital solutions to remove the paper-based inert waste permit system and a revised Inert Waste Policy will be presented to cabinet upon completion of this work. As such, in order to safely enable the earlier reinstatement of inert waste facilities it is recommended that these proposals are implemented until such time that a revised policy is approved.

The re-introduction of inert waste facilities is possible as a result of other operational changes to be introduced to coincide with the Government's coronavirus roadmap milestone date of 29 March 2021. Doing so at the earliest opportunity is advantageous as Spring is the time households generate the most inert waste. An urgent decision is requested to facilitate this and allow advanced communication of the changes to residents.

Consultations

N/A

Implications:

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

Financial

The suspension of inert waste facilities was based on operational and safety requirements and was not financially motivated. Costs that will be incurred as a result of customers delivering inert waste that has been stored over the last year will in effect be offset by savings that were made as a result of them not doing so this financial year.

It is not considered that removal of the limits will have any significant financial impact as the limits applied are generally sufficient for the amount of inert waste most householders produce. Restricting delivery in vans and trailers will discourage potential abuse and excessive usage will be monitored and challenged. In the region of £30,000 per annum was previously received in charges from customers delivering additional quantities of inert waste. Income will no longer be generated until such time as a revised policy is in place.

It should be noted that these arrangements are only temporary and it is anticipated that any costs in relation to them will be managed within the Waste service budget

A saving will be made in administrative costs of printing and posting paper permits which, pre-COVID-19, was in the region of £5300 per annum.

Risk management

It is not considered that the Access Policy change carries any notable risk. The system has been operating successfully during COVID-19 operations. Conversely the return to a paper-based permit system potentially increases the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

The proposed changes to Inert Waste arrangements carry the risk that excessive quantities and/or commercial waste may be delivered. This will be mitigated by the implementation of measures to identify and record excessive usage and customers doing so will be restricted in their usage. Measures in this respect are already in place for excessive delivery of any waste type.

List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
None		

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A

Urgent Decision Taken on behalf of Cabinet: Declarations

Leader of the County Council

Recycling Centre Access and Inert Waste Policies

Original recommendation, as set out in the report, approved without amendment. Yes/No *

Original recommendation amended and decision as follows: Yes/No *

I have a pecuniary/non-pecuniary interest in this matter. Yes/No *

If an interest is declared please give details below:

.....
Leader of the County Council

insert date

Chief Officer

I certify that this is an appropriate and accurate record within the terms of Standing Order C30(2) and (3) of the decision taken by the Cabinet Member.

.....
insert title of authorising officer

insert date

*Delete as appropriate

This decision is to be taken by more than one Cabinet Member and all relevant Cabinet Members must be in agreement with the decision

Urgent Decision Taken on behalf of Cabinet: Declarations

Cabinet Member for Technical Services, Rural Affairs and Waste Management

Recycling Centre Access and Inert Waste Policies

Original recommendation, as set out in the report, approved without amendment. Yes/No *

Original recommendation amended and decision as follows: Yes/No *

I have a pecuniary/non-pecuniary interest in this matter. Yes/No *

If an interest is declared please give details below:

.....
Cabinet Member for Technical Services,
Rural Affairs and Waste Management

insert date

Chief Officer

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