

**Review of HWRC Opening Hours and Waste Acceptance Criteria**  
**Briefing Report – February 2013**

**I. Introduction and Summary**

- I.1 Plymouth City Council provides two Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC), Chelson Meadow and Weston Mill for residents (householders) of Plymouth to deposit 'household' waste free of charge.
- I.2 The Centres are popular with residents and provide a high standard of service with: extensive opening hours; close attention to customer care; and high diversion of waste from landfill currently 83% at Chelson and 77% at Weston Mill.
- I.3 Upgrades to the HWRC layouts in recent years and improvements in working practices have led to improved efficiencies at the sites which coupled with changes in customer needs show that there is capacity to reduce and amend certain aspects of the service provision with minimal impact on customers. Such changes would make the service more efficient and provide associated savings at a time when value for money is a high priority.
- I.4 Trade and commercial wastes are not permitted to be deposited at the HWRCs, although in some circumstances Small & Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) can make arrangements at Chelson Meadow for the paid disposal of waste and free deposit of recycling items. However, apart from Automated Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) equipment, van access controls and staff monitoring usage, there are currently few restrictions with regard to entry and waste acceptance at the HWRC sites.
- I.5 Therefore, in recognition of the ever increasing costs of managing and disposing of waste there is a need to revise the Council's HWRC waste acceptance criteria to prevent and deter illegal use by traders and provide some restrictions on unreasonable and excessive use which is subsidised unfairly by the majority of Plymouth council tax payers. Such measures have also become necessary to align with HWRC waste restriction policies recently introduced by neighbouring authorities.
- I.6 Following a review of the HWRCs current service provision, an options appraisal of the potential mechanisms to control misuse of the centres with minimal impact on bona fide users has identified the following measures which are recommended for adoption:
- **Reduction of the HWRCs opening times to align more efficiently with customer usage.**
  - **Extension of the existing van permit scheme to include trailers and additional access restrictions.**
  - **Limits to the amount of soil and rubble (hardcore) that can be accepted.**
- I.7 It is envisaged that the adoption of these changes will have very little impact on the majority of Plymouth residents and legitimate customers and will collectively produce efficiency savings of around £200k per annum which will contribute to the required Environmental Services budget reductions and help offset known pressures within the waste disposal service area. If these changes are implemented in 2013/14, the

impact on usage and waste arisings will be monitored during the remainder of financial year to evaluate whether future changes to HWRC's are warranted.

## **2. Background**

### **Legal Obligations**

- 2.1. The Council has a statutory obligation under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to provide a facility, generally known as a Civic Amenity Site or Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) where 'residents' can deposit waste 'free of charge'.
- 2.2. Under the regulations, the Council has no obligation to accept waste from commercial sources or from persons that reside outside of Plymouth although a reasonable charge can be made for waste generated from these sources. The Council can also place restrictions on materials that are deemed to be non-household waste such as soil and rubble, and also on how waste materials are received.

### **HWRC efficiencies**

- 2.3. Following a £2.2 million upgrade in 2009 Chelson Meadow boasts facilities amongst the best in the country and is one of the largest centres of its type while Weston Mill was refurbished in 2007 and is operated via an innovative partnering contract with a 3<sup>rd</sup> sector organisation.
- 2.4. The improvements to the facilities in terms of layouts and provision, and better operational procedures to assist customers and divert waste from landfill, have led to considerable efficiencies and exemplar diversions of wastes from landfill as well as additional capacity to increase vehicle and customer hourly throughput.

### **Neighbouring authorities' policy changes**

- 2.5. During 2011 PCCs neighbouring authorities, like many English authorities, adopted stricter HWRC access controls and waste acceptance criteria because of the need to control waste and reduce costs. For example Devon County Council's measures included the implementation of charges for materials sourced from DIY and home improvements i.e. soil & rubble, plasterboard, bonded asbestos as well as tyres as there is no statutory requirement to collect these waste materials.

### **Review of site usage**

- 2.6. Monitoring and surveys of the usage of Chelson Meadow and Weston Mill HWRCs, including Automated Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) data, indicates that the centres are potentially receiving materials from non-Plymouth resident sources including illegal trade waste sources as evidenced by a small number of users who are regularly depositing excessive amounts of waste at the sites, particularly green waste, soil & rubble and items from house clearance, often in trailers.

## **3. Proposed changes**

### **3.1 Option 1 – Reduced Operational Hours**

- 3.1.1 Currently Chelson Meadow opens from 8:30am to 7:30pm (77 hours per week) in the Summer and 8:30 am to 6:30pm (70 hours per week) in the winter whilst Weston Mill is open from 9:00am to 6:00pm (63 hours per week) all year round. In

addition, the Council’s HWRCs open on Boxing Day and New Year’s Day and are the only centres locally and one of a few nationally to do so.

- 3.1.2 A comparison of the Council’s HWRCs opening times with neighbouring authorities (see Table 1 below) demonstrates that our HWRC opening hours, particularly Chelson Meadow, are significantly longer than those provided by other authorities.

Table 1 – Comparison of HWRC Opening Hours

<b>Comparison of HWRC Opening Hours/Week with Neighbouring Authorities</b>		
	Summer	Winter
Plymouth Chelson	77 current	70 current
Plymouth Weston Mill	63 current	63 current
Devon	65	59
Cornwall	49	49
Somerset	40	40

- 3.1.3 An analysis of customer usage patterns of Plymouth’s HWRCs across 2012 also shows that regardless of the time of year, vehicle throughput demonstrates a clear distribution pattern with relatively few visits early in the morning, rising during the day and reducing after 4pm and most significantly after 6pm.

- 3.1.4 Given that Plymouth’s opening hours are extensive in comparison to neighbouring local authorities and indeed to most HWRCs nationally and there are clearly identified points of the day when the Council’s sites are not well patronised, hence there is ample scope to significantly reduced opening hours with minimal impact on the vast majority of customers.

**Revised opening times**

- 3.1.5 It is recommended that from April 2013 Chelson Meadow & Weston Mill HWRC opening hours be standardised with both sites opening at 9:30 am and closing at 6pm in the summer and 5pm in the winter with the exception of Chelson Meadow which will operate extended hour on Mondays and Saturdays.

- 3.1.6 These extended hours for the Chelson Meadow site which will accommodate customer need and confer some flexibility in access times for customers who cannot access the sites during the day.

- 3.1.7 Table 2 below summaries proposed opening times at Chelson Meadow with Table 3 summarising opening times for Weston Mill.

**Table 2 Proposed Chelson Meadow HWRC opening hours**

<b>Chelson Meadow Revised Opening Times Commencing April 2013</b>	<b>Chelson Meadow Revised Opening Times Commencing November 2013</b>
<b>Summer (36 weeks April -</b>	<b>Winter (16 weeks November -</b>

<b>October)</b>		
Day	Opening	Closing
Monday	9.30am	7pm
Tuesday	9.30am	6pm
Wednesday	9.30am	6pm
Thursday	9.30am	6pm
Friday	9.30am	6pm
Saturday	8.30am	6.30pm
Sunday	9.30am	6pm
<b>Total Opening Hours/week = 62 hours</b>		

<b>March)</b>		
Day	Opening	Closing
Monday	9.30am	6pm
Tuesday	9.30am	5pm
Wednesday	9.30am	5pm
Thursday	9.30am	5pm
Friday	9.30am	5pm
Saturday	8.30am	5.30pm
Sunday	9.30am	5pm
<b>Total Opening Hours/week = 55 hours</b>		

**Table 3 Proposed Weston Mill HWRC opening hours**

<b>Weston Mill Revised Opening Times Commencing April 2013 Summer (36 weeks April - October)</b>		
Day	Opening	Closing
Monday -Sunday	9.30am	6pm
<b>Total Opening Hours/week = 59.5 hours</b>		

<b>Weston Mill Revised Opening Times Commencing November 2013 Winter (16 weeks November - March)</b>		
Day	Opening	Closing
Monday - Sunday	9.30am	5pm
<b>Total Opening Hours/week = 52.5 hours</b>		

**Closure on Boxing Day and New years Day from 2013**

3.1.8 Customer usage records show that Boxing Day and New Years Day openings are not overly well patronised as many residents believe the HWRCs are already closed as these days are major bank holidays. Due to the lack of customer demand, as from 2013 it is proposed that both HWRCs will close on these bank holidays.

3.1.9 Incorporation of the above opening hour and bank-holiday changes would provide estimated net efficiency savings of £179k.

**3.2 Option 2 – Extension and modification of the existing van permit scheme**

**Current Van Permit Scheme Overview**

3.2.1 At present vans are excluded from using Weston Mill HWRC for safety reasons and a permit system for vans is in place at Chelson Meadow. Van permit holders are issued with 12 permits per annum but there are currently no restrictions on trailer usage.

3.2.2 An analysis of records showed that during 2011/12 less than 6% of van permit holders used all 12 permits while a site usage survey undertaken in 2012, demonstrated a relatively high usage of trailers and very frequent visits by some

customers. This information suggests traders maybe evading the van permit scheme by transporting materials into the centres via trailers.

- 3.2.3 Although the number of vans towing a trailer accessing Chelson Meadow is relatively low, the amount of tonnage deposited per visit can be high as many trailers arrive fully loaded – for example, a transit sized van towing a typical large trailer could transport 1.5 tonnes of waste into Chelson Meadow in a single visit which is more than a typical Plymouth family of 2 adults and 2 children will generate in household waste per year (the average household currently produces 630kg per annum).
- 3.2.4 Similarly, although the number of very large double axle trailers (over 3 metres) visiting the HWRCs is low, a fully loaded trailer has a very high carrying capacity of up to 3.5 tonnes. Also during peak operational times, these very large trailers present operational and safety issues, and increase congestion at the centres, particularly at Weston Mill due to its limited circulation space.

### **Revised HWRC Permit Scheme implementation from April 2013**

3.2.5 Limiting and controlling the number of visits per household for either a van or trailer will curtail excessive and misuse of the sites and restrictions to the size of trailers will improve site safety and reduce congestion. Permit schemes are already implemented at many HWRCs across the country – local examples being Cornwall & Bristol while Devon County impose other access restrictions and charging for certain wastes. It is therefore proposed that the Council adopt the following control measures: -

- Extension of the van permit scheme to include trailers;
- One permit will be issued per household for either a van or a trailer;
- The number of visits per permit will be limited to:-
  - 12 visits per annum for a small van or small trailer - below 1.8 metres (6ft) in length (*Small van eg. Ford fiesta, Vauxhall Corsa, Citroen Berlingo*)
  - 6 visits per annum for large van or large trailer – from 1.8 metres (6ft) to 3 metres (10ft) in length (*Large van eg Ford Transit, Vauxhall Movano, VW Transporter*); and
- Ban on trailers over 3 metres (10ft)

3.2.6 The permit scheme will be extended to Weston Mill HWRC to cover trailer usage but the van ban at the centre will remain in force.

3.2.7 Incorporation of the above control measures are estimated to provide net waste disposal savings of around £11k although this could be greater depending on the level of existing misuse.

### **3.3 Option 3 – Construction & Demolition (C&D) Waste.**

#### **Current waste acceptance criteria for soil and rubble**

3.3.1 A general review of HWRC waste acceptance policies locally and nationally shows that the Council is one of the few authorities in the southwest (and indeed nationally) that has not adopted stricter controls at HWRCs for the acceptance of

construction and demolition wastes for which there is no statutory obligations to accept.

- 3.3.2 Analysis and monitoring of non-statutory waste arisings show that the Plymouth's HWRCs are receiving a high tonnage of soil and rubble (approx 8,600 tonnes per annum) which is in turn costing Plymouth's Council Tax payers to dispose of.

### **Proposed soil and rubble restrictions implementation from April 2013**

- 3.3.3 To avoid unnecessary and unreasonable costs associated with soil and rubble that maybe originating from excessive and unauthorised usage such as from trade sources, it is proposed to limit to the amount accepted in the future at Plymouth's HWRCs as follows:-

- Car users will have to show evidence of residing in Plymouth on each visit
- Permit holders – will be limited to the number of visits that can be apportioned to soil and rubble in a 12 month period. Changes will be integrated into the revised van/trailer permit scheme (see section 3.2.5 above)
  - Small van or small trailer - Max 3 visits to deposit soil and rubble of the 12 visits allocated over a 12 month period
  - Large van or large trailer - Max 1 visit to deposit soil and rubble of the 6 visits allocated over a 12 month period.
- Residents wishing to deposit large amounts of soil and rubble or having exceeded their permit allowance will be able to deposit soil and rubble for a charge per tonne based on the current disposal rate, at present £12/tonne.

- 3.3.4 Incorporation of the above waste acceptance control measures are estimated to provide net waste disposal savings of around £10k through reduced receipt and disposal of soil and rubble tonnage.