Report of:	Cabinet Member for Street Scene and Parks
To:	Housing and Neighbourhoods Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date:	22nd April 2021

Impact of the HWRC Booking System

Review Information

At the meeting of the Housing and Neighbourhoods O & S Committee on 25th March 2021 the Committee requested that a report is brought back on the operational impact that the HRC booking system had had and to consider whether this should continue post-Covid.

For more information about this report, please contact

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Background

With the introduction of the first National Lockdown in March 2020 and the restrictions that followed the city's five HWRCs had to close. They remained closed until the advice changed from Central Government. The Waste Service worked with Veolia to ensure a Covid Secure operating plan could be put in place that would see a reduction in the number of cars permitted, the introduction of social distancing and an enhanced cleaning regime.

In consultation with the Cabinet Member for Street Scene and Parks the decision to open four of the five sites was taken. The HRWC at Castle Bromwich could not be opened as there were ongoing major roadworks at the entrance which made the potential queuing dangerous. The four remaining sites reopened on the 7th May 2020.

Following the re-opening there was considerable queuing at all four of the city's sites. The long queues and wait times caused issues with local residents, road users (as queues encroached onto the highway) and some local businesses whose premises are adjacent to HRWC entrances. This resulted in the Police being called to several sites over the first few days and indeed continued over the weeks that followed.

The queues were as a result of the reduced capacity at the sites, due to social distancing measures that had to be put in place, and this was despite a repeated and extensive warning and informing campaign via all available communication channels (external media publicity, social media via Council channels and the "view the queue" webcams).

The car count on the first day of operation (7th May) across the four sites was 1310. The average queue time was two and a half hours and on some sites the queue time was over 4 hours.

Given that at the time there was no defined end to the need for social distancing, the limited success and impact of the Council's previous efforts to warn and inform and coupled with the need to do something to alleviate the problem, the decision was made to look at alternative operating models.

The introduction of a vehicle booking system to visit our network of HWRCs was the logical step forward to maintain the Covid Secure operations but remove the issues related to the extensive queues.

The Booking System

A number of booking systems were looked at.

The booking system introduced was a Cloud-based system and residents had to book via the internet. Residents could only book an available slot two days in advance. They were also restricted to one slot a week.

A communication plan was put in place and the booking system was introduced on the 12th June 2020, 37 days after the sites reopened. Residents were required to bring proof of their booking and address to the HWRC, this has now been relaxed.

The Impact of the Booking System

The car count on the first day of operation (7th May) without the booking system, across the four sites was 1310. The average queue time was two and a half hours, on some sites the queue time was over 4 hours.

The car count on the last day of operation without the booking system was 1083. Queuing was still significant with an average queuing time of 2 hours.

The car count on the first day of operation with the booking system was 1152. There were no queuing issues at any site with an average queue time of less than 5 minutes.

The car count on the 8th April was 2706. Queue times are less than 5 minutes, (Castle Bromwich has been reopened which increased the numbers by 531).

From the 12th April additional slots were added as part of the National road map out of Covid restrictions and the car count was 3077 out of the 3420 available slots.

The introduction of the booking system has evolved over the last few months. Available slots can be booked two hours in advance rather than 2 days. A cancelation option has been introduced to enable residents who can no longer make their time.

The slots have been increased but usage is significantly reduced to times before Covid Restrictions were introduced. The system does allow for additional slots to be added as Covid Restrictions are reduced and therefore operations could continue with a booking system.

Covid has had a significant impact on the operating procedures at our HWRCs. Social distancing and regular cleaning of facilities has had a detrimental tonnage and usage of the sites.

In June 2019 across all the HWRCs the car count was 147,519. A total of 8728 tonnes was processed across the sites.

In June 2020 the car count had reduced to 38,434. A total of 4383 tonnes was processed across the sites.

There have always been issues of queuing at all of the sites resulting in continual complaints from local residents and businesses. At Lifford for example extra traffic measures are brought in during the summer to help control the traffic. The booking system has removed all of these issues.

Although the car numbers are significantly lower it has been found that residents have been keeping to their designated time slots. Therefore if the booking system is kept in the long term we believe slots can be increased without the traffic issues experienced in the past.

The removal of lengthy queuing also has a positive affect on the local air quality. We haven't got the statistical figures to show this but there is reliable evidence to show the negative effect of idling cars and localised air quality.

The Future

It is too early to make a decision about the long term use of the booking system. With Covid restrictions reducing a further review looking at the amount of slots that can be made would need to take place.