

Councillor Deborah Urquhart, Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change

March 2022

Recycling Centres Booking System

Report by Director of Environment and Public Protection

Electoral divisions: All

Summary

On 4th March 2021 the Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change [took a decision](#) to implement a pilot booking scheme at six of the eleven Recycling Centres in West Sussex. The trial scheme was introduced because social distancing measures at the busy Recycling Centres added pressure to the nearby roads leading to some disruptive queuing and delays for site visitors and road users. The measures sought to improve the management of vehicles accessing the Recycling Centres in a safe way for both staff and residents and to reduce impacts on nearby businesses.

The scheme was successful in these objectives and popular with the majority of users surveyed in July 2021 as well as local businesses at Manor Royal Business Improvement District Crawley and Arun Business Park in Bognor. On 5th October 2021, the Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change [took a further decision](#) to undertake wider public consultation in respect of making this booking system permanent and extending the system to the Burgess Hill Recycling Centre in anticipation of intensified use of its access road due to a major housing development.

This report sets out the findings of the public consultation and a proposal regarding the future use of a booking system for West Sussex Recycling Centres.

Recommendation

That the Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change approves:

1. That the pilot booking system is made permanent at the Bognor Regis, Crawley, Horsham, Littlehampton, Shoreham and Worthing Recycling Centres.
2. Delegation of authority to the Director of Environment and Public Protection, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change, to extend the booking system on a site-by-site basis to Billingshurst, Burgess Hill, East Grinstead, Midhurst and/or Westhampnett Recycling Centres, on a temporary or permanent basis should this be needed to manage congestion or other issues in the future.

Proposal

1 Background and context

- 1.1 From April 2021 a booking system was implemented at the six sites known to experience queuing. The scheme was introduced primarily in order to prevent traffic congestion at sites which had, from time to time, experienced serious and disruptive queuing. There was a major concern leading into Spring 2021 that these issues would be further exacerbated by social distancing measures. The booking system has managed demand for site access and has worked well. Users have been able to pre-book safe access to a Recycling Centre with minimal on-site waiting time, thus improving the user experience, improving air quality in the immediate area, local residents have been able to gain access to their homes and local businesses have been able to trade without being impeded by queuing cars.
- 1.2 By the end of January 2022 over 500,000 bookings had been made using the system.
- 1.3 As a service enhancement same day bookings will be introduced at the Recycling Centres, starting with the site at Worthing in early March and once tested it will be made available at the other sites.

2 Public Consultation

- 2.1 Between 10th November and 21st December 2021, a public consultation was carried out in West Sussex using the online consultation portal and paper copies being made available at Recycling Centres and Libraries. The consultation was advertised on social media channels, via a newsletter, at Recycling Centres via Postcards handed out to residents on arrival, on the booking system web page and emails sent to users who had booked appointments over a four-week period.
- 2.2 The consultation received 7,374 responses, the full survey report is attached at Appendix A, the headline results are summarised below:
 - 62% (3863) strongly agreed/agreed that the booking system should be maintained, 38% (2382) disagreed or strongly disagreed.
 - 71% (5196) have used the booking system, 29% (2128) had not.
 - 98% had booked online, 2% via telephone.
 - Of the 2128 people that had not used the system, 56% didn't need to book at their Recycling Centre, 20% didn't want to, 9% had not needed to visit, 5% could not find an appointment to suit and the other 10% answered other.
 - In terms of making a booking 83% (4429) said it was extremely/quite easy, 9% (497) said neither easy or difficult, 6% (304) said quite/extremely difficult and 3% didn't know.
 - Looking at the individual Recycling Centres and the respondents that use those sites asking if the booking system should be maintained. Please note this question allowed residents to select more than one site for example a

user could select both Worthing and Shoreham and both are reflected in the below table for all answers.

Recycling Centre (RC)	Strongly Agree / Agree		Strongly Disagree / Disagree	
	No. that use RC	%	No. that use RC	%
Bognor Regis	442	61	288	39
Crawley	667	63	390	37
Horsham (Hop Oast)	609	67	303	33
Littlehampton	845	77	247	23
Shoreham	382	57	290	43
Worthing	974	76	304	24
Total	3919	68	1822	32

- In terms of why residents felt negative about using the booking system 70% (2230) wanted to decide on the day, 19% (596) found it inconvenient to book, 1% (36) did not find the system easy to use and 10% (333) said other.
- The main improvement suggested was to allow on the day bookings with 62% (4477), 14% (980) would not make any improvements, 4% (273) suggested slots were increased. 13% (951) suggested another improvement and 7% (513) said don't know.

3. Billingshurst, Burgess Hill, East Grinstead, Midhurst and Westhampnett Recycling Centres

- 3.1 All the West Sussex Recycling Centres are, to some extent, impacted by the rapid growth in housing both in terms of increased user-base and impact on local road network. A number are close to new developments that have either recently finished or are in the planning stage.
- 3.2 In the short term, Burgess Hill is the Recycling Centre most likely to be impacted from encroaching development. The site is a dual Recycling Centre and Waste Transfer Station used by Mid Sussex District Council (MSDC). Queues can form from a mixture of customers, refuse collection and other MSDC vehicles, and articulated HGVs. At times traffic management is required to allow HGVs to pass queueing cars.
- 3.3 The Burgess Hill site is accessed via Fairbridge Way. This road is a dead end, originally used only to gain access to the Recycling Centre and a commercial business. Construction of 325 homes on an adjacent brownfield site is currently in progress. As these new homes are built and occupied, additional pressure is expected to be placed on the access road.
- 3.4 Consideration was given to adding Burgess Hill to the list of sites recommended in this report for the permanent booking scheme. However, given that there is not an immediate need to do so, it is proposed to hold open this option.

- 3.5 Midhurst currently has plans for 70 new homes on adjacent land and access to these and the Recycling Centre will be through a shared entrance. While there is, similarly, no immediate need for measures to manage the profile at Midhurst or elsewhere, it is possible they may be needed at some point in the future.
- 3.6 Additionally, given the covid experience, it is conceivable that other circumstances may arise, possibly at short notice, which for safety or other reasons extension of the scheme, at least on a temporary basis, might be justifiable. If the scheme is made permanent at the pilot sites, a proven and popular booking system would be in place and the additional cost would be minimal (the cost of adding additional sites is covered in section 6.2 of this report). The option to extend the scheme to one or more other sites without repeating a full governance process could therefore be helpful.
- 3.7 It is therefore recommended that authority be delegated to the Director of Environment and Public Protection, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change, to introduce the booking system at any of these sites on a temporary or permanent basis should this be needed to manage congestion or respond to other issues.

4 Other options considered (and reasons for not proposing)

4.1 Put in place traffic management at sites for busy periods – Not Recommended

Recycling Centre staff were used to try and control traffic at sites during post-lockdown reopening in May 2020. This had very limited success; many of the Recycling Centres West Sussex operate do not have room to queue and consequently waiting vehicles caused congestion on the public highway. This approach would also result in unbudgeted costs and might at best mitigate, but not prevent, congestion.

4.2 Remove the booking system – Not Recommended

The consultation showed that 68% of residents strongly agreed/agreed that the booking system should stay in place, and at the two busiest sites Littlehampton and Worthing 76% and 77% wanted the system to stay. The introduction of same day booking will address the principal criticism of the scheme.

4.3 Make the booking system permanent – Recommended

On the basis of the consultation response, the preferred option is to make the booking system permanent at the Bognor Regis, Crawley, Horsham, Littlehampton, Shoreham and Worthing Recycling Centres.

5 Consultation, engagement and advice

- 5.1 This report is based on feedback received from stakeholders in West Sussex. All County, District, Borough, Town and Parish Councils had the opportunity to respond to the consultation along with residents.
- 5.2 Feedback and strong support for the scheme from local businesses was included in the previous report [Recycling Centres Booking System Review ECC05 \(21/22\)](#) by Manor Royal Business Improvement District Crawley and Arun Business Park in Bognor.

- 5.3 Reports on the booking system have been taken to the Communities, Highways and Environment Scrutiny Committee on 3rd March 2021 and 30th September 2021
- 5.4 The Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change has been involved in the previous reports and has been updated on the results of the public consultation.

6 Finance

- 6.1 Whilst it is difficult to attribute changes in visitor numbers to any one factor (the pandemic, weather and exclusion of illegal trade waste being major influences), overall levels of waste, across a number of materials, were lower during the period of the trial compared to previous years. Some of this waste will have been diverted to kerbside collections and skip hire companies (both have seen an upturn during the pandemic). The potential of the scheme to encourage illegal disposal routes is covered under 8.4 below.
- 6.2 The cost per site for the system is fixed at £1,200, the cost in 2022/23 onwards to covering up to seven sites is £8,400, any increase in sites numbers will increase this cost by an additional £1,200 per site the cost to run the booking system at all eleven Recycling Centres in West Sussex would therefore be £13,200. The costs for call handling are based on three full time staff, currently the service is using two as many customers book online.
- 6.3 The expectation is that the cost of implementing and administering the booking system – and any expansion from addition of other sites - can be met from within existing resources.

	Current Year 2021/22 £s	Year 2 2022/23 £s	Year 3 2023/24 £s	Year 4 2024/25 £s
IT System Costs	22,700	8,400	8,400	8,400
Provision of Call Handling	52,000	78,000	78,000	78,000
Reduction in Waste at Sites	-74,700	-86,400	-86,400	-86,400
Net Impact from Decision	0	0	0	0

The cost of waste disposal is directly linked to the amount of waste that is handled by the Council on a per tonne basis, a reduction in tonnage will ultimately lead to a lower overall cost for the service.

- 6.4 The effect of the proposal:

(a) **How the cost represents good value**

West Sussex needs to ensure that its Recycling Centre network is used to its full potential, and a booking system will encourage frequent users who dispose of

small quantities of waste to attend less frequently and reduce the number of total visits undertaken.

(b) Future savings/efficiencies being delivered

The rate of new housing growth in West Sussex means that the usage of Recycling Centres is only going to increase. With limited capital and land options available for the County Council to invest in infrastructure, the booking system will have the effect of smoothing peaks and troughs in demand and make best use of the assets during opening hours

(c) Human Resources, IT and Assets Impact

No impact on West Sussex County Council IT services as the system is externally hosted and supplied by a third party.

Call Centre costs are covered as part of the proposal.

7 Risk implications and mitigations

One of the risks of the booking system was that residents would not engage with the system and the recycling rate - a key performance indicator under *Our Council Plan 2021-25* - would reduce. The service monitors the overall performance of the Recycling Centres by looking at the overall recycling rate. The table below shows that overall recycling performance is similar to previous years since the booking system started.

	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
21/22	76%	73%	78%	78%	77%	78%	77%	75%				
20/21	62%	77%	69%	73%	74%	75%	73%	72%	69%	69%	69%	74%
19/20	78%	79%	80%	78%	77%	78%	74%	75%	70%	70%	71%	73%
18/19	77%	77%	80%	77%	75%	78%	77%	75%	69%	72%	75%	77%

Risks and Opportunities	Mitigating Action (in place or planned)
Booking system not available to resident as third-party website is down	The system has been available 99.99% of the time since it was live. In the event of serious problems, the booking scheme would be suspended while the problem is fixed.
Resident arrives without a booking	Resident is not admitted and reminded that a booking is required to use the site. This will be mitigated by the implementation of same day bookings. Currently less than 5% of residents visit with no booking.
Resident not turning up	Residents are encouraged to cancel as far as possible in advance if they cannot take up their slot. "No-shows" will be monitored, and anyone who repeatedly takes up a slot without using it can be contacted. By monitoring the no-shows percentage, the number of booking slots have been increased.
Reverting back to no booking system will cause	Service will need to arrange for traffic management which is unbudgeted expenditure and not always effective. There will be

Risks and Opportunities	Mitigating Action (in place or planned)
traffic issues which may worsen over time	reputational issues given the popularity of the scheme with those previously affected by traffic congestion.
Government may issue guidance to prohibit booking schemes	This is an issue that is best left to local determination, and it is considered unlikely that government would use legislation to fetter local discretion.
Loss of public support	The public consultation has shown that the majority of users support the booking system.
Introduction of same day booking	This measure will address the issue most raised by users as an objection to the scheme or suggested as an improvement.
Avoidance of Future Congestion	The proposal to delegate authority to introduce the booking system at further sites should the need arise will enable any pressing issue to be dealt with quickly.

8 Policy alignment and compliance

8.1 Legal implications

WSCC as the statutory Waste Disposal Authority has a statutory duty to provide facilities for its residents to dispose of their household waste under section 51 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and, aside from a prohibition on charging residents of its area to access sites, has express and implied powers as to how this duty can be exercised. The proposal does not conflict with the duty.

8.2 Equality duty and human rights assessment

Age and disability have been identified as having potential for a low negative impact. It is recognised that some people may find it difficult to use the booking system and we want to make sure there are no barriers to accessing our Recycling Centres. The system is compliant with digital accessibility standards so that customers using screen readers or with low vision can use the website. For those who cannot access the internet, bookings can be made through West Sussex County Council's Call Centre.

8.3 Climate Change and Public Health

This proposal supports climate change objectives by reducing the number of cars queueing on and near Recycling Centres including in areas of housing and business / retail parks. This will have a positive impact on emissions, pollution and air quality for the area. The encouragement to make fewer visits with more material per visit is also helpful in carbon reduction terms.

8.4 Crime and Disorder

We recognise that additional management controls could potentially lead to anti-social or illegal behaviour in respect of fly-tipping. It is not possible to guarantee that changes will not have an impact. The booking system was introduced in April 2021, the table below shows the reported number of fly

tipping incidents logged by District and Borough Councils between April – September in both 2020 and 2021. The data shows that the number of fly tipping incidents has reduced by 733 in the period the system has been in place versus the previous year.

	Apr-20	May-20	Jun-20	Jul-20	Aug-20	Sep-20	Total
Incidents	619	615	721	652	669	752	4028
Tonnage	192.55	203.68	267.98	217.95	262.56	240.04	1384.76
	Apr-21	May-21	Jun-21	Jul-21	Aug-21	Sep-21	
Incidents	636	562	502	590	469	536	3295
Tonnage	240.32	263.86	229.34	244.7	232.88	219.63	1430.73
	17	-53	-219	-62	-200	-216	-733

The table below shows the number of incidents per 1000 people for 2020/21 for West Sussex. The average for England was 20 per 1000, the highest being 43 and the lowest at 10 in the South West. The average in the South East was 13.

Adur	13.9
Arun	9.7
Chichester	13.6
Crawley	13
Horsham	10.1
Mid Sussex	3.6
Worthing	6.9

9 Social value

This proposal has no major social value impact; while some may find that booking is an additional burden, many users reported an improved experience through reduced queuing.

10 The recommendation supports **Our Council Plan 2021-25 Priorities** by:

Keeping People Safe from Vulnerable Situations: Although primarily concerned with social care, this priority also extends to safe use of council facilities.

A Sustainable and Prosperous Economy

The benefit to local businesses is clear from the evidence provided by them.

Making the Best Use of Resources: The proposal will sustain the improved efficiency of the Recycling Centres, reducing traffic delays and provides West Sussex residents living near sites better access and less inconvenience.

Assisting with the underpinning theme of **Tackling Climate Change**

The proposal also helps to support the following outcomes:

- Outcome 3 - Maximising the productivity of our assets
- Outcome 4 – Value for money

The scheme has demonstrated no adverse impact on Key Performance Indicator 23: The percentage of Household waste recycled, reused or composted.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Recycling Centre Booking Consultation Report

Background papers

None