

**Report to Councillor Deborah Urquhart, Cabinet Member for  
Environment**

**March 2021**

**Household Waste Recycling Site Booking System**

**Report by Director of Environment and Public Protection**

**Electoral divisions: All**

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**Summary**

Social distancing measures due to Covid-19 at the busy Household Waste Recycling Sites (HWRSs) have added pressure to the nearby roads leading to some disruptive queuing and delays for site visitors, other road users and, in some cases, adjoining businesses and residents.

There is concern that the annual spring upsurge in HWRS usage will coincide with the end of lockdown and growing confidence within the community to travel more. The sites will, however, for the foreseeable future continue to be subject to social distancing measures which will limit throughput.

The Report recommends that a pilot booking scheme is implemented as quickly as possible – initially as a temporary measure - at five sites. The scheme will be reviewed following bedding-in to evaluate and decide whether it should be retained and/or expanded.

**Recommendations**

- (1) That the Cabinet Member for Environment approves the immediate introduction of a pilot HWRS booking system covering the Bognor, Littlehampton, Shoreham, Crawley and Hop Oast (Horsham) sites as detailed in the report.
- (2) To delegate to the Director of Environment and Public Protection, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment, authority to vary, expand or suspend the scheme in the event of operational issues.

**Proposal**

**1 Background and context**

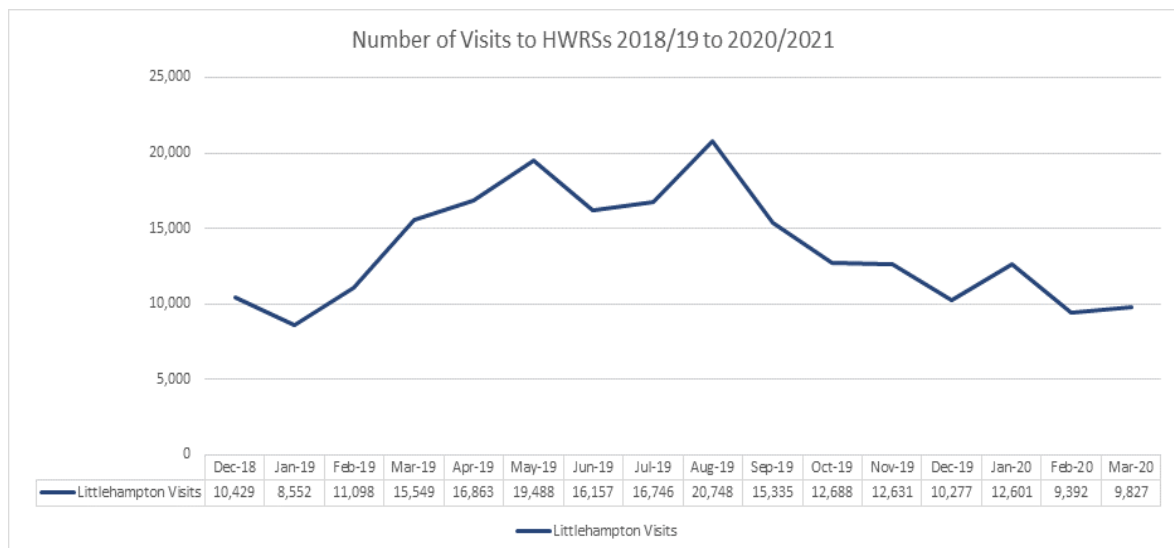
1.1 Under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, waste disposal authorities have a duty to arrange for "places" to be provided at which residents may deposit their household waste. It goes on to say that: -

- (a) Each place is situated either within the area of the authority or to be reasonably accessible to persons resident in its area.

(b) Each place is available for the deposit of waste at all reasonable times (including at least one period on the Saturday or following day of each week except a week in which the Saturday is 25th December or 1st January).

(c) Each place is available for the deposit of (household) waste free of charge by persons resident in the area.

- 1.2 Currently the County Council provides eleven permanent HWRs. The sites have both summer (09:00-18:00) and winter (09:00-16:00) opening hours and are open (depending on site) either 5 or 6 days a week in winter and 5 or 7 days in summer.
- 1.3 A mobile service serving Selsey and the Witterings in the Chichester district is available one day a week on a fortnightly basis. It is not proposed to include the mobile service in the proposed pilot booking scheme.
- 1.4 Queuing at most sites is an issue at peak times, weekends and bank holidays and can disrupt the traffic system around the area and impact on neighbouring residents and local businesses. It is not uncommon, during peak periods, to have vehicles waiting to enter several of the HWRs for up to 90 minutes.
- 1.5 The current impact on sites of social distancing measures has added further pressure and caused disruptive queuing and delays for site visitors and road users.
- 1.6 Post-Christmas 2020, queues at a number of the HWRs – particularly Littlehampton, Shoreham, Horsham, Crawley and Worthing became so long that Sussex Police made requests for sites to close on the grounds of safety for the local area. This occurred when the County was under Tier 4 and prior to the full lockdown from 4<sup>th</sup> January 2021. While making a trip to the recycling centre has remained a permitted activity, non-essential travel has in general been discouraged by the Government and in our own local advice to residents.
- 1.7 There is a major concern, reinforced by the post-Christmas experience, that the end of the current lockdown, and growing public confidence in travel, may coincide with the annual spring surge in demand which generally starts at or around the Easter Bank Holiday. This could place huge pressure on the sites and surrounding network. Figure 1 below uses Littlehampton data to illustrate the typical annual use profile which is similar at other sites.



## **2 Proposal details**

- 2.1 To control and manage the times the HWRs are used and to redistribute visits to reduce the peak usage, it is proposed to pilot an online booking system that would lessen queues and reduce the impact on the local area around the worst affected sites. This would mirror schemes successfully introduced in neighbouring authorities including Hampshire and Kent.
- 2.2 Based on historical experience, the five sites proposed for inclusion are: Bognor, Littlehampton, Shoreham, Crawley and Hop Oast (Horsham). While Worthing has experienced significant queues at peak times, there is reasonable buffer (i.e. internal queuing) capacity in the site. The impact of the measures as well as general demand on the other HWRs will be closely monitored.
- 2.3 Each household would be allowed to visit one of the pilot HWRs once in any seven-day period running from Monday to Sunday. Bookings would be offered on a rolling 14 days in advance and booking for sites will close at 10p.m. on the day before the visit to allow for the information to be sent to the site for the following day's visits.
- 2.4 The booking system would require residents to give their address and postcode details at the time of booking to confirm that they are a resident in West Sussex. If they do not provide a postcode in West Sussex the system will not allow them to progress any further with the booking. As currently, ID checks may be made to confirm residency.
- 2.5 The Council has an agreement with Surrey County Council (SCC) whereby SCC cover costs of permitting Surrey residents who are close to the East Grinstead site to use that site. As East Grinstead is not part of the pilot, this arrangement will be unaffected. There is also an arrangement with Hampshire County Council (HCC) whereby residents who are close to Havant or Petersfield may use those sites. Such users have, since summer 2020, had to book via the HCC system. Members representing those areas have reported positive feedback from those residents. The arrangement will not be affected by this proposal.
- 2.6 While residents will be encouraged to use the on-line system, a telephone booking option will be provided.
- 2.7 It is proposed to add the service to the existing call centre service provided to the Council via the Capita Contract. When the pilot is evaluated other options can be considered based on experience to date in the event that the scheme is to be retained or extended. The expected volume of calls has been estimated by reference to Hampshire's experience adjusted for the West Sussex circumstances.
- 2.8 Residents would be offered slots at half hour intervals and must arrive within the half hour window. They would be required at the time of booking to provide the following information:
  - their car registration, make and model
  - confirmation that it complies with our permitted vehicle types
  - their name and address; and
  - confirmation that they are bringing their own household waste from their own place of residence.

For sites such as Bognor and Shoreham a smaller time slot (say 15 mins) might be appropriate as these sites have little or no queuing capacity, so if all the bookings turn up at the same time it could cause congestion. This level of operational detail will be managed by the waste team.

- 2.9 Additionally, residents could be asked to provide:
- information (from a list) on what waste types of material they broadly expected to bring; and
  - confirmation that they would be happy for the authority to e-mail them information in future about waste related matters.
- 2.10 Residents booking on-line will receive an email confirmation at the time of booking and will receive a reminder email the day before the booking. This will also remind them to bring ID to the site and advise them not to arrive early or late for the booking. Viridor staff will be asked to check the registration number of the vehicle against the day's list and time and allow access. This confirmation will also allow for the booking slot to be cancelled. The proposal allows for additional site security at the five sites for the first month of operation. This is based on previous experience of introducing changes at sites and the reopening of sites after the lockdown closure in summer 2020. The need to extend this will be reviewed in consultation with the contractor.
- 2.11 Viridor will continue to be required to carry out checks for trade waste abuse and vehicles they have concerns over in terms of the waste being carried. Viridor will be asked to submit data on the number of "no shows" at each site for the day (for the purpose of evaluation of the pilot and to determine whether the system could be set up to offer slightly more slots than the theoretical capacity without major disruption if all booked residents do turn up).
- 2.12 In accordance with the aspirations in the County Council's Customer Strategy 2019 – 2024, residents will be encouraged to book online. The system can be accessed equally well via a laptop/computer or a smart phone. Residents who are unable to book directly online themselves could ask a friend or family member to make a booking for them or visit a library for free internet access when they are fully open again. In the event that this is not possible for a resident, they will have the option to book by contacting the WSCC Call Centre where staff will take the customer through the same process as a resident using the online service and either receive the same confirmation email or get a reference number.
- 2.13 In exceptional circumstances – for example out of county residents who are doing a house clearance for a West Sussex relative via a hired van, as currently occurs, the applicant will be asked to contact the waste Team to make arrangements, which will include additional checks about the origin of the waste.
- 2.14 In view of the short timeframe, publicity has already commenced in anticipation that the proposal will be adopted. The booking system will go live two weeks before the introduction of the pilot and the point from which a booking is required. New permanent booking system information signs will be placed near all HWRSs to make residents aware and leaflets will be handed out at sites and social media will be used.

- 2.15 To deal with the likelihood of residents who arrive without a booking during the early days of operation it is proposed that residents arriving at site without a booking will only be admitted at the site manager's discretion, for example if there is space available and no "booked" residents will be inconvenienced. However, there should be no presumption that access without booking will be allowed. Signage and other publicity will make this clear.
- 2.16 The number of slots and timing of bookings will be undertaken on a site by site basis and may vary depending on the season. It may also be possible to keep some time periods clear. (For example, sites could take no bookings between 12:30-13:00 to allow for all staff to take a rest break and ensure optimal staffing levels when residents are visiting sites).
- 2.17 Recommendation 2 would permit the Director of Environment and Public Protection, in consultation with the Cabinet Member, to make the decision to extend the scheme but only in the event of serious and disruptive congestion or other serious operational issues occurring elsewhere. In the event that any major changes are proposed due to operational issues relevant local members would be informed as soon as possible in advance

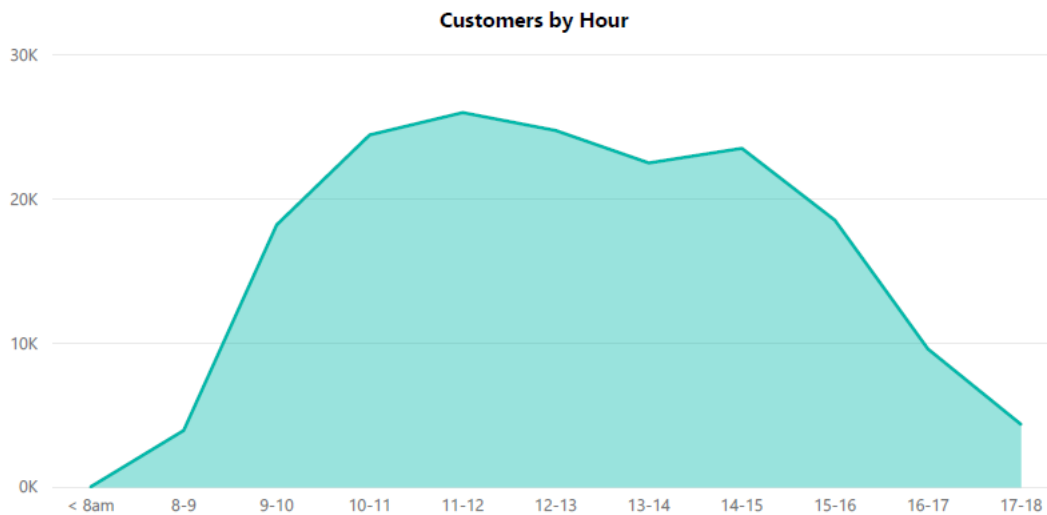
### **3. The Hampshire Experience**

- 3.1 Hampshire County Council (HCC) introduced its booking system across its 24 HWRCs on 15th June 2020. The scheme also covers the HWRCs in Southampton and Portsmouth. As in West Sussex, social distancing measures mean Hampshire sites are also not able to work to full capacity. HCC restricts residents to one visit per week; booking slots are made available up to seven days in advance and it requests that residents cancel their booking if they can no longer attend. Residents who turn up without a booking are turned away.
- 3.2 Some slots are kept in reserve for the Waste Team to allocate for exceptional circumstances. Hampshire's ratio of online bookings and telephone bookings is around 20:1
- 3.3 Hampshire colleagues report that the booking system successfully regulates the flow of visitors to its sites which eliminates traffic issues. Residents are reporting that they like the assurance of having an appointment and the benefit of not having to queue for long periods. Sites generally find that visitors are more positive when they are on-site as they have had a better overall user experience. The initial introduction of the system at short notice was criticised by some largely due to perceived unavailability of booking slots at the busier sites. Initially Hampshire only released slots 48 hours in advance which severely restricted options. Once this was extended to the full 7 days in advance and residents became more familiar with the system, the predominant feedback is positive due to the improved user experience.

### **4 Other options considered (and reasons for not proposing)**

#### **4.1 Opening of HWRSs for additional hours or days – Not recommended**

Opening HWRSs for additional hours or days will require additional staffing at sites which would increase costs and no budget exists for this. The typical time of visit profile for West Sussex sites (figure 2 below) show that residents are less inclined to use sites at either end of the day.



#### 4.2 **Put in place traffic management at sites for busy periods – Not Recommended**

Some limited traffic management measures were put in place during post lockdown reopening in May 2020. This had very limited success as many of the sites do not contain room to queue vehicles and many of the queues take place out of the site on the public highway. This approach would also increase costs. This approach has also been examined at the pilot “pressure” sites during peak use, with input from Area Highways Managers. The options for traffic management are very limited.

#### 4.3 **Continue as is – Not Recommended**

Considering that the County Council understands and can predict the pressure on the sites and surrounding network and that this is likely to result in higher levels of complaints and disruption it would not make sense to simply maintain the status quo.

4.4 **Implement the booking system at all sites simultaneously.** This would have some advantages but, given the very short notice of implementation, the recommendation is to undertake the pilot at the worst affected sites. This is further explored in the risk section below.

### 5 **Consultation, Engagement and Advice**

5.1 Comments on the proposed scheme have been invited from District and Borough Partners and also from representatives of businesses who have been affected by congestion problems. A summary of comments and responses is included at Appendix 1.

5.2 The proposal will be considered by Environment and Communities Scrutiny Committee on 3 March 2021. Comments and responses are summarised in Appendix 2.

5.3 There is insufficient time for public consultation on the proposal, but it is proposed that views are sought as part of the pilot evaluation.

- 5.4 Viridor have raised no objections to the pilot but have requested that additional security staff be provided initially. It is proposed to allow for one additional staff member per booking site for four weeks at an estimated cost of £14,500.

## 6 Review of the Scheme

- 6.1 The pilot scheme will be reviewed within 6 months of starting. Minor operational adjustments will be made (for example how many slots to release at each site in each half hour period) can be easily adjusted very quickly on the system.
- 6.2 The evaluation criteria will include public feedback on the experience of booking and using the sites, analysis of traffic impacts at all eleven sites, impact on waste volumes handled (so far as can be determined in the absence of a control) and any impacts on partner services such as kerbside collections and levels of fly tipping.

## 7 Financial Impact

- 7.1 There are 3 principal cost elements to the scheme:

(i) Purchase of the booking system: £22,700 in current year and £13,200 pa thereafter (not adjusted for inflation).

(ii) Cost of external call centre provider dealing with telephone bookings. Based on a prudent estimate of call volumes benchmarked to the Hampshire Experience, the requirement will be for two extra call centre staff. The estimated cost will be £3-4k per month, with the higher-level figure included in the summary below.

(iii) an allowance for additional site security at the pilot sites for the first 4 weeks of operation. This is estimated at £14,500 for one additional agency staff member per site at all opening hours. If the additional security is not needed, the agency staff can be stood down or redeployed – or it can be extended as necessary

The scheme may result in some reduction in overall throughput of material to the sites. Residents for example may prefer to subscribe to the District and Borough's garden waste collection service or for larger projects hire a commercial skip or dumpy bag collection service given that multiple trips to the nearest HWRS in a short period will no longer be an option. The actual volume of material handled in any given year is affected by several variables outside the control of the Council: principally the weather and economic confidence. The additional impact of adding the booking system is not quantifiable and no assumption for savings has been made.

	Current Year 2020/21 £	Year 2* 2021/22 £
Booking Labs	22,700	13,200
Call Handling	2000	24,000
Site Security	7,250	7,250

	Current Year 2020/21 £	Year 2* 2021/22 £
Net Impact from Decision	31, 950	-44, 450

Notes:

\*based on six months initially

The costs of the trial for the initial six months will be covered from the covid support funding.

The financial implications going forward after six months would form part of the consideration should there be a case to continue with the booking scheme in any form.

## 7.2 The effect of the proposal:

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

The proposal is a pilot and involves adding a new service to an existing corporate booking system provider. The call centre cost is competitive with commercial rates for the same service.

### (b) **Future savings/efficiencies being delivered**

The rate of new housing growth in West Sussex means that the usage of sites is only going to increase. With limited capital and land options available for the County Council to invest in infrastructure, this scheme will have the effect of smoothing peaks and troughs in demand and make best use of the assets during opening hours. Its effectiveness as a longer-term management control will be evaluated as part of the overall review.

### (c) **Human Resources, IT and Assets Impact**

The proposal has no human resources or assets impacts. It is intended to add the booking system capability to a number of our functions provided under a contract with Booking Labs. As such the IT implications are less than would be the case with procuring a specific cloud based solution for this provision from scratch. Nevertheless there will be some IT and Data Protection involvement to confirm information security/ data management due diligence and architectural design assurance.

## 8 Risk implications and mitigations

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Mitigating Action (in place or planned)</b>
The partial coverage of the network in the scheme may result in diversion to other sites resulting in elevated congestion there.	This will be monitored and considered in the overall review of the pilot scheme. Options may include extending the pilot scheme to cover those sites



<b>Risk</b>	<b>Mitigating Action (in place or planned)</b>
The short time frame for implementation may mean residents are unaware of the scheme prior to travelling	The scheme will be communicated through social and traditional media intensively and advertised at all sites. Communication about the scheme being under consideration commenced with a press release on 16 <sup>th</sup> February 2021 and was picked up by local press immediately
Booking system not available to resident as third-party website is down	The Hampshire report that Booking Labs system functioned well. Similarly, client units in West Sussex County Council have not had issues. In the event of extended system failure, unrestricted access to sites can be put back in place with appropriate messaging on the Council's website.
Increased levels of fly tipping	Hampshire report no elevation in levels of fly tipping since the inception of their scheme and make the same observation as has been made previously in West Sussex; the majority of serious fly tipping is perpetrated by rogue traders. Monitoring will form part of evaluation in areas covered by the pilot.
General Public Satisfaction with the scheme	Other councils including Hampshire report that generally residents accept the scheme – and feedback from West Sussex staff and residents using the Hampshire scheme is also positive. Feedback from the West Sussex Scheme in operation will be considered as part of the six-month review process

## **9 Policy alignment and compliance**

### 9.1 Legal implications

None

### 9.2 Equality duty and human rights assessment

It is not considered that a specific equality impact assessment is required in order to ensure compliance with the public sector equality duty. The pilot scheme will however be evaluated with a view to assessing any aspects which may have a bearing on the Council's duty and policies for equality and diversity.

### 9.3 Climate Change and Public health

This proposal will reduce the number of cars queueing on and near HWRSSs including in areas of housing and business / retail parks, this will have a positive impact on pollution and air quality for the area.

### 9.4 Crime and Disorder

There are not expected to be any Crime and Disorder implications of the proposals.

## 9.5 Social value

This proposal has no social value impact because a framework already in place at the County Council is being used.

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### **Appendices**

Annex 1 - summary of comments and responses from District and Borough partners and representatives of businesses who have been affected by congestion problems. (To follow)

**Background papers** - None