

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

**March 2021**

**Household Waste Recycling Sites - Pilot 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.

The annual spring upsurge in HWRS usage has commenced a month earlier than usual and is coinciding with growing public confidence in travel as the Government's Roadmap out of lockdown has been announced. 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 system is implemented as quickly as possible – initially as a temporary measure - at six sites. The scheme will be reviewed at around 6 months to evaluate and decide whether it should be retained and/or expanded.

**Recommendations**

That the Cabinet Member for Environment -

1. approves the immediate introduction of a pilot HWRS booking system covering the Bognor, Littlehampton, Shoreham, Worthing, Crawley and Hop Oast (Horsham) sites as detailed in section 2 of the report.
2. delegates authority to the Director of Environment and Public Protection, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment and relevant local Members, to vary, expand or suspend the scheme during the six-month pilot period in the event of operational issues.
3. agrees that proposals emerging from the pilot booking system's six-month review will be considered by the Environment and Communities Scrutiny Committee prior to any further decision.

## 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 HWRSs. 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 HWRSs 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 HWRSs – 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 the County Council’s local advice to residents.
- 1.7 Officers identified 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. In fact this period has commenced around a month earlier than normal and is already placing huge pressure on the sites and surrounding road network. The same pressures are being reported by East Sussex County Council and other waste Disposal Authorities. Figure 1 below uses Littlehampton data to illustrate the typical annual use profile which is similar at other sites. The 2021 experience has shifted the usual spring upswing a month or so to the left.



## 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 and many other shire counties. The on-line booking package would be provided by BookingLab who already provide a number of services to the County Council.
- 2.2 Based on historical experience, the six sites proposed for inclusion are: Bognor, Littlehampton, Shoreham, Worthing, Crawley and Hop Oast (Horsham). Worthing has been added to an original list of five on the recommendation of Environment and Communities Scrutiny Committee on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2021. The site has experienced major queuing issues disrupting the local road network at the end of February / early March, despite the 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 six 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 able 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 and relevant local Members, 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 consulted as soon as possible in advance

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

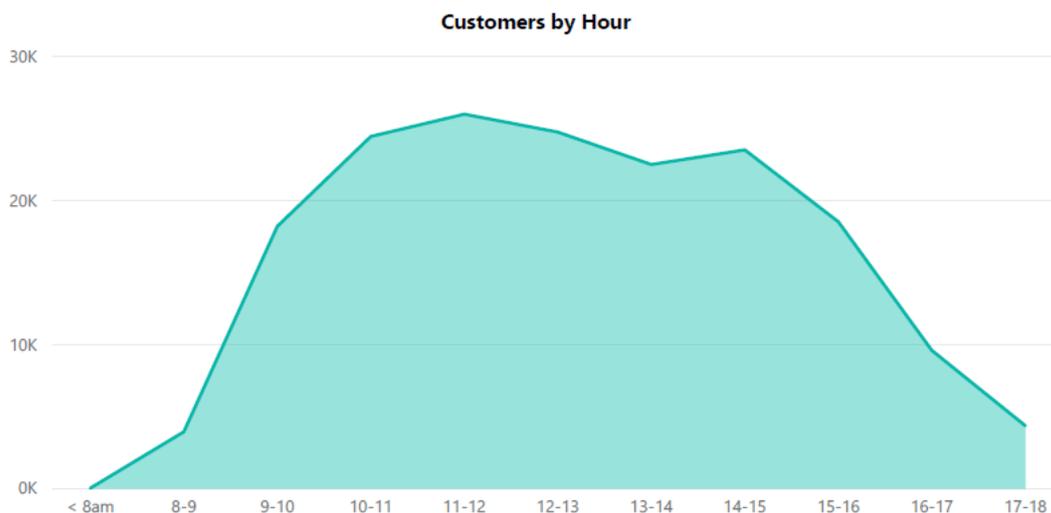
- 3.1 Hampshire County Council (HCC) introduced its booking system across its 24 Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) on 15th June 2020. The scheme also covers the HWRCs in Southampton and Portsmouth. As in West Sussex, social distancing measures mean Hampshire sites are also not able to work to 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 to 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 council 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 was considered and supported, with additional recommendations 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 £17,400 .

## **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) and can be easily and quickly adjusted 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 BookingLab 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 £4-5k 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 £17,400 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 councils' 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 £
BookingLab	22,700	13,200
Call Handling	2,500	30,000
Site Security	2,000	15,400
Net Impact from Decision	27,200	58,600

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

Risk	Mitigating Action (in place or planned)
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
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 BookingLab 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 HWRSs 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.

Steve Read

**Director of Environment and Public Protection**

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### **Appendices**

Appendix 1 - summary of comments and responses from district and borough council partners and representatives of businesses who have been affected by congestion problems.

Appendix 2 – summary of comments made by Environment and Communities Scrutiny Committee on 3 March 2021.

**Background papers** – None

## **Appendix 1**

### **Proposal for Trial HWRSSs Booking System – Responses**

Comments were sought from districts and borough councils and from representatives of businesses who have previously brought issues at Bognor and Crawley to our attention. The following responses were received.

#### **Steve Sawyer, Executive Director Manor Royal BID**

The Manor Royal BID is supportive of this proposal and plans to trial the “Click and Tip” booking system proposed for the Crawley site in Metcalf Way.

At peak times Metcalf Way is a busy and congested area. The combination of significant queues caused by visitors to the Crawley Household Waste and Recycling Site, a popular out of town retail park (County Oak) and the surrounding businesses that share the same road space and a single point of entry and exit have, over many years, been a problem. More recently this has been so disruptive it has led to businesses calling for the police to attend. The queues can extend from Metcalf Way, onto County Oak Way and at their worst onto the main London Road (A23). This is hugely disruptive to the road network and to businesses in the area whose customers and suppliers are discouraged as a result. The problems are compounded by the traffic generated by the popular retail park and the growing demand for the waste and recycling facilities as Crawley itself grows. It is a common complaint that businesses locally are in effect made inaccessible, which in turns impacts their profitability.

This problem has also been identified in the Manor Royal Transport Study (carried out by independent transport consultants Steer Davies Gleave) and has been a driver for the proposed improvements to be delivered as part of the Crawley Growth Programme.

These improvements include changes to the junction of County Oak Way and London Road and the introduction of a one way system at Metcalf Way to accommodate a level of queuing (a short queuing lane) during busy periods while allowing other traffic to bypass the queue to access the nearby businesses. However, even with this intervention WSP (engaged to design and deliver the Crawley Growth Programme) are clear that while these changes would help they would not be sufficient to resolve the problem without some form of queue management being introduced alongside the proposed physical changes.

For these reasons the Manor Royal BID is supportive of the planned trial at the Crawley Household Waste and Recycling Centre in Metcalf Way and are happy to support the County Council.

In providing our response can I thank and congratulate the County Council for looking at this issue, taking on board the difficulties faced by businesses based here and looking at innovative ways to solve the problem. We appreciate that such changes are not introduced without a degree of resistance sometimes and that there may be teething issues, but we feel that longer term this will provide a better customer experience as well as alleviating a very real problem for local business owners.

For completeness the conclusions from a recent (October 2020) consultation with businesses in the area concerning the introduction of the Metcalf Way one-way system in response to the queuing issues is provided below:

**OVERALL** there was a strong feeling that the proposed changes would not be sufficient to resolve the problem of long queues during peak demand, which could only be resolved if a queue management system was introduced (e.g. a click and drop system, similar to the kind of system other local authorities had introduced).

**Shirley Scott**

**One of the Directors of Arun Business Park and Director of Handprinted Ltd**

This sounds like a really good idea and one that would be sustainable for the future.

As you know over the years the businesses on Arun Business Park have been negatively affected by the queues to the Recycling Site. Our business had definitely lost trade when the queues were busy, both customers and deliveries have turned away. I think it is especially important for our site as the road into the Recycling Site is owned by Arun Business Park and the queues have been a constant issue for the businesses on the park.

This type of system worked very well for West Wittering Beach last year to control the amount of visitors and, as you have pointed out, it was successful in Hampshire.

I think having the option to book online or by phone is also wise. Limiting the amount of visits allowed is also very welcome – I believe there are a number of small businesses that use the site under the veil of their waste being non-commercial and attend the site very regularly.

In order to work safely with our social distancing measures in place we are currently working six or seven days of the week (smaller teams in at any time) so I was not looking forward to having to queue for extended time to get into our premises over the weekends of the summer months.

I also feel this is protecting the staff working at the Recycling Site by ensuring the numbers of attendees can be controlled.

Thank you proposing this.

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**Roger - Electair**

First thoughts, sounds worth a try.

It will stop the people that park in front of my office with a van and load it into a car several times. Great that you are being pro-active.

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**Nigel Sheehan**

**Director, Crawley Borough Council**

Thanks for forwarding the proposal to introduce booking systems at 5 HWRS sites prior to Easter. Please see comments from Crawley below. Happy to discuss if helpful.

1. It would seem likely that initially, a relatively high number of users would turn up at the HWRS without having made a booking. That is what they have always done, and it would seem likely that a number would continue to do that without necessarily being aware of the booking requirement. Provision should be made to accommodate this without having disappointed (or angry) customers turned away.
2. Collectively we are of course all keen to make it easier for residents to 'do the right thing'. There is a danger that if a suitable timeslot cannot be found, some residents would find it easier to fly tip their waste or recycling. What would be done to reduce this potential and please ensure the quantity of fly tipping is one of the assessment measures used to evaluate the pilot.
3. If the concern is to manage distancing, there will be times when the respective HWRS's will be less busy. Is it a necessity to introduce the booking system for all of the hours the HWRS is open? Would it provide a better option to focus the booking system to on peak demand hours and to keep under review whether it is required during off peak hours?
4. Has consideration been given to extending the opening hours to help to spread the peak time demand and manage distancing?

Grateful if you can keep us posted re the implementation. Will be useful to involve our Comms Team if and when appropriate.

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**Adam Chalmers, Director of Community Services  
Horsham District Council**

The Covid-19 pandemic has only intensified the pressure on the Hop Oast HWRS and although we agree with the aims of the proposed booking system, we think a simpler solution would be to increase the opening hours of the site. In the longer term we think the capacity of Hop Oast site should be increased to meet the demand of our growing district. We are working with the County Council to explore this with them and we welcome the news that they have commissioned a study to look at options for increasing the site's capacity.

If the booking system trial is implemented, we do not think that residents should be limited to one trip in any seven-day period. This does not sound practical and it is a measure that could be introduced at a later date if the evidence from the trial suggests it is necessary.

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## **Appendix 2**

At its meeting on 3 March 2021, the Environment and Communities Scrutiny Committee considered the proposals and agreed the following:

- Its general support for the trial, but with a few concerns.
- Its general support for the communications package.
- That the public will have the chance to input during the trial period.
- It would like Worthing to be included in the trial so requested that the Cabinet Member speak to the other local County Councillors. If agreed, then to be added to recommendation 1.
- Fly tipping is a concern and the Committee asked that officers worked with district and borough councils to keep informed of any increases in the number of incidents, as part of the trial.
- Asked that site managers show some flexibility, particularly at the start of the trial, to those who hadn't booked.
- At the end of the trial the Committee would like to have this matter brought back, regardless of whether the decision is to abandon the booking scheme, or to extend it. This should be added to the Decision Report as a third recommendation.
- In recommendation 2 please add local members to those being consulted. In addition, add "during the 6-month period" at the end of recommendation 2.
- When the booking system is reviewed in line with new recommendation 3, it should, if possible, include the longer-term waste strategy, including a review of the opening hours/days of our waste sites.

### Note:

At the time of writing, the above forms part of the draft minutes, pending formal approval at the meeting on 9 June 2021.