

Expansion of the Recycling Centre Booking System

Report by Assistant Director, Environment and Public Protection

1. Summary

- 1.1 In July 2023, Cabinet received a report providing an update on the Council Plan, national and local context, and the medium-term financial forecast for the next five years. The report showed a budget shortfall of £171m over the next five years, of which £45m was expected in 2024/25 before any increase in Council Tax.
- 1.2 A balanced budget must be set each year and over the summer all services considered opportunities to reduce costs and align expenditure with council priorities. The Waste Management Service identified that £200,000 a year could potentially be saved by extending its booking system to all Recycling Centres across the County. The saving results from a decrease in the amount of waste accepted at the Recycling Centres following the introduction of booking requirements and by diverting materials from residual waste to recycling.
- 1.3 This proposal formed part of the budget reduction proposals considered by Cabinet on 17 October and will be considered by the Communities, Highways and Environment Scrutiny Committee on 17 November 2023.

2. Background

- 2.1 On 4 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.
- 2.2 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, which neighbour two of the Recycling Centres. On 5 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 future use of its access road due to a major housing development.

3. Public Consultation

- 3.1 Between 10 November and 21 December 2021, a public consultation was carried out using the council's online consultation portal. Paper copies were also made available at Recycling Centres and Libraries. The consultation was advertised on social media channels, through 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.

- 3.2 The consultation received 7,374 responses; the headline results are summarised below:
- 62% (3,863) strongly agreed/agreed that the booking system should be maintained, 38% (2382) disagreed or strongly disagreed.
 - 71% (5,196) had used the booking system, 29% (2,128) had not.
 - 98% had booked online, 2% via telephone.
 - Of the 2,128 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% (4,429) said it was extremely/quite easy, 9% (497) said neither easy or difficult, 6% (304) said quite/extremely difficult and 3% didn't know.
- 3.3 In terms of why residents felt negative about using the booking system, 70% (2,230) 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) chose "other".
- 3.4 The main improvement suggested was to allow on the day bookings with 62% (4,477). 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.

4. March 2022 [Decision](#)

- 4.1 On 18 March 2022, the Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change approved:
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 Assistant Director (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.
- 4.2 The system was improved to accept on the day bookings, with residents able to book a slot within 15- or 30-minutes time if available. This was the main improvement requested through the public consultation exercise and the main reason why some residents had felt negative about the system.

5. Booking Numbers

- 5.1 Residents have made some 1,722,736 bookings online and a further 39,471 bookings by phone. Bookings can be made up to 14 days in advance or booked on the day. Currently around 60% of residents book in advance with around 40% deciding on the day.

6. Recycling Rate/Tonnage

- 6.1 Recycling performance (% of waste recycled) is a key performance indicator within our Council Plan 2021-25. The table below shows that overall recycling performance remains similar to previous years. Over time, the booking system may help to increase recycling levels, as less congested sites should allow better access to the correct recycling containers and opportunities for improved customer service.

Overall Recycling Rate

	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Total
23/24	76%	80%	79%	76%	77%	77%							
22/23	72%	79%	80%	78%	77%	77%	79%	76%	71%	70%	75%	75%	76%
21/22	76%	73%	77%	77%	76%	77%	76%	74%	65%	71%	71%	72%	74%
20/21	62%	77%	69%	73%	74%	75%	73%	72%	69%	69%	69%	74%	71%
19/20	78%	79%	80%	78%	77%	78%	74%	75%	70%	70%	71%	73%	75%
18/19	77%	77%	80%	77%	75%	78%	77%	75%	69%	72%	75%	77%	76%

- 6.2 Overall, the Recycling Centres in West Sussex have seen waste reduce over the last few years. The table below shows that waste has reduced at the greatest rate at those sites which operate a booking system.

*Booking Site	19/20 Tonnes	20/21 Tonnes	21/22 Tonnes	22/23 Tonnes	Tonne Drop V 19/20	% Drop
Bognor*	8985	5088	3293	4190	-4795	-53%
Crawley*	15770	7626	11179	9854	-5916	-38%
Horsham*	8536	7180	5739	5745	-2791	-33%
Littlehampton*	9367	8038	6472	6563	-2804	-30%
Shoreham*	6930	4890	4235	4447	-2483	-36%
Worthing*	17731	14832	13656	13918	-3813	-22%

*Booking Site	19/20 Tonnes	20/21 Tonnes	21/22 Tonnes	22/23 Tonnes	Tonne Drop V 19/20	% Drop
Billingshurst	6621	6318	7311	6721	100	2%
Burgess Hill	12591	11469	12486	10319	-2272	-18%
East Grin	6092	6177	6362	5300	-792	-13%
Midhurst	1671	1627	1769	1664	-7	0%
Westhampnett (Was shut in 19/20 due to fire)	10552	12346	16737	14440	3888	37%
Total Tonnes	104846	85591	89239	83161	-21685	

6.3 The biggest reductions in waste type are garden waste, residual waste , soil & hardcore, wood, scrap ferrous metal, mixed papers and textiles.

7. Benefits of a Booking System

- The booking system levels out the peaks and troughs in visitor numbers. This improves operational efficiency and the queues that previously existed have largely become a thing of the past.
- Site operatives have had more time to assist customers in sorting and maximise levels of recycling and time to split large bags that generally contain recycling items.
- The booking system introduces a limit of five visits per month, this means that residents tend to give more thought about their visits, making fewer visits, and thinking more about the items they take to the Centres.
- It encourages residents to make use of other forms of waste disposal such as home composting, reuse, donating to charity or using a skip for larger DIY works at home. West Sussex currently accepts DIY waste for free and sees much higher levels of this material when compared to neighbours who charge for this waste stream.
- More time is available at the gate for staff to ensure that only household waste is entering sites and that commercial waste is excluded. Any waste that comes from a commercial activity is business waste and a charge for disposal is required of the producer. Each business must follow its duty of care in transporting and disposing of commercial waste.

- The booking system 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.
- New housing growth in West Sussex particularly close to the sites at Burgess Hill and Midhurst means that the usage of sites is expected to increase in the future.
- Limited capital funding and land options are available for the County Council to invest in new or expanded sites, meaning the booking system will help to manage demand and make best use of the assets during opening hours.

7.1 Operating the booking system has resulted in reduced volumes of waste handled, transported, and processed. Introducing booking at the remaining Recycling Centres should result in further waste disposal savings for the County Council.

8. Fly Tipping

8.1 It is sometimes feared that additional management controls at Recycling Centres could lead to anti-social or illegal behaviour in respect of fly-tipping. Recent [research](#) commissioned by DEFRA found no link between booking systems and increased incidence of fly-tipping. Similarly, a [study](#) by WRAP concluded that there is no evidence that charging for DIY-type waste at Household Waste Recycling Centres pushes up fly-tipping.

8.2 The County Council in partnership with the District and Borough Councils has launched 'Let's SCRAP fly tipping', a county-wide campaign designed to:

- alert local residents and business owners to the different forms of fly tipping, and that we all have a shared responsibility to help tackle the problem.
- highlight the enforcement work taking place to try to identify and punish the perpetrators of fly tipping in the county wherever possible.

8.3 The campaign which started in April 2021 began with educating residents about the different forms of fly tipping, and the duty of care everyone has when it comes to disposing of waste responsibly (by following the 'SCRAP code'). It then moved on to warn of the implications for people who do fly tip and could lead to Fixed Penalty Notices and prosecutions for offenders.

8.4 Three trial Joint operations have taken place in Chichester, Horsham and Arun Districts which involved stopping vehicles that could be potentially carrying waste. Officers interviewed drivers and examined the vehicles' contents to deter and disrupt ongoing fly-tipping, help identify waste-carrying vehicles, and ensure compliance.

8.5 The success of the trial means all the partners have committed to extending the operation on a rolling programme throughout West Sussex.

8.6 The joint operations to date have resulted in:

- 197 vehicles stopped.
- 14 drivers penalized by Sussex Police; 2 vehicles seized.
- 20 businesses advised by Environment Agency to register or face fines.
- 183 inspections by Local Authority and Environment Agency officers.
- 29 prohibitions served by DVSA.
- 40 vehicles tested for fuel contaminants.

8.7 The District and Borough Councils in West Sussex are responsible for reporting the numbers of fly tipping for their own areas on Waste Data Flow.

8.8 In 2021/22 there were on average 19 fly-tipping incidents per 1,000 people in England. London had the highest average number of incidents per 1,000 people at 46, while the Southeast had one of the lowest at 11 incidents per 1,000 people.

8.9 Fly-tipping incidents in West Sussex show a slight decrease over the last three years (2021-23). Arun is currently the only district to have experienced increased fly-tipping in this period.