

## **Report to Wayne Lewis, Assistant Director (Environment and Public Protection)**

**December 2023**

### **Recycling Centres – extension of booking system to all sites**

#### **Report by Head of Waste Services**

**Electoral divisions: All**

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#### **Summary**

In March 2022, the Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change made a [decision to introduce a booking system](#) on a permanent basis, at the Bognor Regis, Crawley, Horsham, Littlehampton, Shoreham and Worthing recycling centres.

The Cabinet Member also delegated authority to the Assistant Director (Environment and Public Protection) to extend the booking system to Billingshurst, Burgess Hill, East Grinstead, Midhurst and Westhampnett centres should this be needed.

A review of the impact of the booking system has identified a range of benefits, including the efficiency of the sites and reductions in the overall volumes of waste being processed and through diverting waste from residual to recycled. There have also been improvements in the customer experience. In addition the Waste Management Service identified that £200,000 a year could be saved by extending its booking system to all recycling centres across the county.

This report sets out proposals to extend the booking system across all West Sussex Recycling Centres on a permanent basis to secure these benefits.

#### **Recommendation**

That the Assistant Director (Environment and Public Protection) approves the extension of the booking system to Billingshurst, Burgess Hill, East Grinstead, Midhurst and Westhampnett recycling centres, on a permanent basis.

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#### **Proposal**

##### **1 Background and context**

- 1.1 From April 2021 a [booking system was implemented](#), on a trial basis, at the six sites known to experience traffic congestion including disruptive queuing on the highway. There was concern in spring 2021 that this would be exacerbated by the Covid-19 social distancing measures. The booking system has managed demand for site access and has worked well. Users have been able to pre-book

access to a recycling centre with minimal on-site waiting time, improving the user experience and improving air quality in the immediate area. Local residents have been able to more readily gain access to their homes and local businesses have been able to trade without being impeded by queuing vehicles.

- 1.2 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 at the Bognor Regis, Crawley, Horsham, Littlehampton, Shoreham and Worthing centres, 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.
- 1.3 Between 10 November and 21 December 2021, a public consultation was undertaken. The consultation received 7,374 responses; 62% (3,863) strongly agreed/agreed that the booking system should be maintained, 38% (2,382) disagreed or strongly disagreed. In terms negative comments, 70% (2,230) wanted to decide on the day and 19% (596) found it inconvenient to book.
- 1.4 The main improvement suggested was to allow on the day bookings; with 62% (4,477) suggesting this.
- 1.5 Following the outcome of the consultation, in March 2022, the Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change made a [decision to introduce a booking system on a permanent basis](#) at the Bognor Regis, Crawley, Horsham, Littlehampton, Shoreham and Worthing Recycling Centres.
- 1.6 The system was subsequently 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.
- 1.7 The booking system has been embraced by residents with over 1,781,000 bookings being made online and a further 39,806 bookings by phone. Residents are able to book up to 14 days in advance or on the day, currently around 60% book in advance with the other 40% deciding on the day.

## **2 Proposal details**

- 2.1 The recycling centres with booking requirements have seen a decrease in waste types such as garden waste, residual waste, soil and hardcore, wood, scrap ferrous metal, mixed papers and textiles. This reduced tonnage has provided the County Council with a disposal saving. Extending the system to all sites should produce further savings and the benefits set out below.
- 2.2 The Waste Management Service identified that £200,000 a year could potentially be saved by extending the booking system to all recycling centres across the county. The saving results from a decrease in the amount of waste received following the introduction of booking requirements and by diverting materials from residual waste to more efficient recycling routes.
- 2.3 In addition to savings that may result from extending the booking system, it brings wider benefits such as:
  - Levelling out the peaks and troughs in visitor numbers. This improves operational efficiency and minimises queuing. Residents have more time to select the correct recycling container and staff have more time to offer

recycling advice, and time to split large bags that generally contain items that could be recycled.

- Introducing a limit of five visits per month. This means that residents tend to give more thought about their visits, making fewer visits, and think more about the items they take to the centres.
- Encouraging 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.
- Making more time for gate staff to ensure that only household waste is entering sites and that commercial waste is excluded.

2.4 The booking system supports climate change objectives by reducing the number of cars queueing on and near 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.

2.5 The online booking system will go live two weeks before entry checks begin. New booking system information signs will be placed near the Recycling Centres to advise residents, leaflets will be handed out at sites and social media messaging will be used. Local Members, District, Town and Parish Councils will also be written to.

2.6 During the first month of operation of the booking requirement, residents arriving without a booking will be admitted at the site manager's discretion, for example if there is space available and no resident with a booking will be inconvenienced. However, there is no presumption that access without booking will be allowed. Signage and other publicity will make this clear.

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

#### **3.1 Remove/don't extend the booking system – Not Recommended**

On the day booking has proved popular with residents and is well used. A customer survey in 2023 showed that 96% of visitors had an excellent or good experience of using the booking system and 98% agreed or strongly agreed that slots were available when they wanted them. Not extending the booking system would likely increase costs and would mean that the proposed budget saving would not be achieved. Therefore, this option was discounted.

### **4 Consultation, engagement and advice**

4.1 The consultation undertaken in 2021 received feedback from a wide range of stakeholders in West Sussex. All County, District, Borough, Town and Parish Councils had the opportunity to respond to the consultation along with residents.

4.2 Between 25 November and 4 December 2023, a customer satisfaction survey has been carried out at all sites. At the six booking system sites residents were asked two booking system related questions:

4.3 Visitors were asked to rate the overall experience of using the booking system. Overall, visitors said they found it either 'Excellent' (72%) or 'Good' (24%). Just 4% of visitors found it 'Adequate' or 'Poor'.

- 4.4 Visitors were asked if there are normally booking slots available when they wanted them. Overall, (98%) strongly agreed or agreed. Just 2% disagreed or strongly disagreed.
- 4.5 Reports on the booking system have been taken to the Communities, Highways and Environment Scrutiny Committee (CHESC) on 3 March 2021, 30 September 2021, 2 March 2022 and 17 November 2023. The latter formed part of the report on the Council Plan, MTFS and Preparations for 2024/25 Draft Budget.
- 4.6 At the 17 November 2023 meeting the Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change advised members that recent DEFRA research (see 7.5) found no link between booking systems and increased incidence of fly-tipping and the Let's SCRAP fly tipping campaign (also 7.5) would tackle incidents of fly-tipping.

## 5 Finance

- 5.1 The cost of the booking system is fixed at £26,000 for 11 sites and a three-year contract will be entered into via G-cloud.
- 5.2 The expectation is that the cost of extending the booking system can be met from within existing resources and has been factored into the anticipated savings.
- 5.3 Revenue consequences:

	Current Year 2023/24 £s	Year 2 2024/25 £s	Year 3 2025/26 £s	Year 4 2026/27 £s
IT System Costs	13,200	26,000	26,000	26,000
Communications	0	5,000	0	0
Reduction in Waste at Sites	-86,400	-231,000	-231,000	-231,000
Net Impact from Decision	-73,200	-200,000	-205,000	-205,000

Overall, the Recycling Centres in West Sussex have seen waste reduce over the last few years. Appendix 2 shows that waste has reduced at the greatest rate at those sites with a booking system. The cost of waste disposal is directly linked to the amount of waste that is handled by the Council on a per tonne basis, this reduction in tonnage leads to a lower overall cost for the service.

- 5.4 The effect of the proposal:

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

Extension of the booking system helps improve the operational effectiveness of the Recycling Centre network and ensures that excessive use of the sites is dissuaded.

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

The rate of new housing growth in West Sussex means that the usage of Recycling Centres will increase. New housing developments have or will in the

near future happen around the sites at Burgess Hill, Westhampnett and Midhurst and, if a booking system isn't introduced, residents and businesses are likely to experience delays from queuing traffic.

Whilst it is difficult to attribute changes in visitor numbers to any one factor (weather, and exclusion of illegal trade waste being major influences), overall levels of waste, across a number of materials, have been lower on booking sites compared to previous years. Some of this waste may have been diverted to kerbside collections and skip hire companies.

With limited capital funding 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.

**6 Risk implications and mitigations**

<b>Risks and Opportunities</b>	<b>Mitigating Action (in place or planned)</b>
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 has been suspended while the problem is fixed and those with bookings have been immediately advised.
Resident arrives without a booking	This is mitigated by same day bookings. Less than 5% of residents visit without a booking. Allowances will be made where site capacity allows for the first four weeks following the introduction of booking.
Resident doesn't arrive	No-shows will be monitored, and anyone who repeatedly takes up a slot without using it can be contacted. By monitoring the no-show's percentage, the number of booking slots has been increased.
Recycling rate loss - a key performance indicator under Our Council Plan 2021-25.	The Service monitors the overall recycling rate. Appendix 2 shows that overall recycling performance is similar to previous years since the booking system started

**7 Policy alignment and compliance**

7.1 Our Council Plan –

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

**A Sustainable and Prosperous Economy**

Local businesses have benefited from reduced queuing/blocked roads adjacent to Recycling Centres.

**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.

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, and offers potential to improve it by having less congested sites and scope for greater interaction between site staff and customers.

#### 7.1 Legal implications -

WSCC 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 has express and implied powers as to how this duty can be exercised. This proposal does not conflict with this duty.

#### 7.2 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 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. Currently less than 2% of residents phone to make a booking.

#### 7.3 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 has 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.

#### 7.4 Crime and disorder –

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.

The County Council in partnership with the District and Borough Councils has been using the 'Lets SCRAP fly-tipping' campaign that other authorities have reported successes with. 'Let's SCRAP fly tipping' is a county-wide campaign that is 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.

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.

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

- 7.5 Social value – the benefits identified from the scheme since implementation and set out in this report provide a range of social value benefits for local residents and local businesses.

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## **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Tonnes Comparison

Appendix 2 – Overall Recycling Rate

**Background papers - none**