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| Report title: Recycling Centre Vehicle Booking System Pilot | |
| Report to: Place Services and Economic Growth Policy and Scrutiny Committee | |
| Report author: Jo Boyd-Wallis, Project Manager | |
| Date: 20 December 2023 | For: Discussion |
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| County Divisions affected: All | |

1. Introduction

The Committee is asked to consider the results of the evaluation and public consultation on the Recycling Centre Bookings pilot at Essex Recycling Centres for Household Waste (“recycling centres”), and advise on the future of the booking process.

The purpose of the pilot has been to test if introducing a booking system to smooth demand across available opening hours would:

- improve operational efficiency
- reduce congestion at recycling centres
- help manage waiting times
- improve the customer experience
- reduce misuse by commercial vehicles
- encourage users to separate recyclable waste by creating a more positive on-site experience

Phase 3 of the pilot has built on the learnings from Phases 1 and 2, during which trial booking processes were introduced for vans and large trials at the nine van-friendly recycling centres (February 2022), and for all vehicles using Rayleigh Recycling Centre (June 2022), respectively.

On 13 March 2023, the pilot was extended and expanded to all vehicles at all 21 recycling centres for a period of nine months (Phase 3).

Data has been collected between 17 March and 30 September 2023 (6.5 months) to inform the final evaluation of the pilot. The evaluation considers a range of data and feedback including:

- any impacts on fly-tipping reported by District, Borough and City Councils
- user feedback and surveys
- feedback from operational teams

- tonnage changes
- congestion at recycling centres

When the decision was made to extend the pilot to all sites and all vehicles, Essex County Council (ECC) committed to holding a public consultation to seek residents' views before deciding on the future of the booking process. Public consultation ran for six weeks from 9 October to 19 November 2023. Analysis of the consultation responses is being carried out by an independent research company.

Following the outcomes of the evaluation and emerging findings of the public consultation analysis, ECC is engaging with Place Services and Economic Growth Policy and Scrutiny Committee. Cabinet will take a decision on the future recycling centre bookings in Spring 2024.

2. Links to Everyone's Essex

The vehicle booking system supports the Everyone's Essex strategic aims to deliver a 'High Quality Environment', including the commitment to minimising waste, and 'Service Excellence' in line with the Everyone's Essex strategy.

Vehicle flows are now better aligned with site capacity and able to be monitored and adjusted as necessary. As a result, vehicle queuing time and congestion at sites have been reduced, as evidenced by user feedback and feedback from Recycling Centre staff.

Customer feedback provided through two user surveys indicates that over 90% of respondents are satisfied or better with the booking system currently in use, and with the overall customer experience. Our evaluation has shown that the booking process has had a positive impact on operational efficiency and site safety. The evaluation also shows that tonnage brought to recycling centres and recycling performance at recycling centres has not been adversely impacted. All of these impacts contribute to more efficient delivery of waste services and a better environment in which to encourage customers to correctly segregate their waste for reuse and recycling.

As queueing has reduced, this will have resulted in lower carbon emissions and air pollutants from idling vehicles. The booking system provides us the means to collect data to better understand and manage use of recycling centres in future to help reduce the climate impact of managing Essex's waste in line with the council's net zero targets.

The emerging results of public consultation show that residents are broadly supportive of the booking process (see **Appendix 1**). The consultation has also provided a wealth of valuable feedback that ECC can use to improve the booking process and recycling centre operations in future, helping to deliver our aim of Service Excellence.

3. Action Required

This is an opportunity for the Committee to consider the findings of the booking

process pilot evaluation and emerging results of public consultation.

The committee is asked to support the Cabinet Member to develop recommendations for the future of the booking process, in advance of a Cabinet decision early in 2024.

Expected attendees to support the discussion:

Councillor Peter Schwier, Cabinet Member for Waste Reduction and Recycling

Jason Searles, Head of Waste Policy and Circular Economy

Katy Chambers, Circular Economy Development Manager

4. Presentation

Appendix 1: Recycling Centre Vehicle Booking System presentation

Appendix 2: [Interim Evaluation Report 2023](#)

Appendix 3: [Phase 1 Pilot Evaluation Report](#)