

Forward Plan reference number: FP/219/11/21

Report title: Recycling Centre for Household Waste (RCHW) Vehicle Booking System Trial	
Report to: Cllr Malcolm Buckley, Cabinet Member for Waste Reduction and Recycling	
Report author: Samantha Kennedy, Director for Environment and Climate Action	
Date: 12 January 2022	For: Decision
Enquiries to: Jason Searles, Head of Waste Strategy and Circular Economy, jason.searles@essex.gov.uk	
County Divisions affected: All Essex	

1. Everyone's Essex

- 1.1 Everyone's Essex, our new organisation strategy, sets out four strategic aims and 20 commitments. Within the strategic aim of high-quality Environment, it includes a commitment to minimise waste and to net zero carbon emissions.
- 1.2 Consistent with achieving these commitments, this paper sets out a proposal to introduce a booking system for vehicles attending RCHW to align service access with infrastructure capacity, by spreading usage across the operating day. In doing so this can reduce vehicle queuing times at the sites which will reduce exhaust emissions, improve service levels and increase the segregation of waste for recycling by improving operational efficiency. This supports ECC aims to minimise waste disposal and in doing so the Essex Climate Action Commission's Net Zero targets, as well as delivering on ECC's ambition to deliver a 'High Quality Environment' and 'Service Excellence' in line with the Everyone's Essex strategy.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Agree to the implementation of a vehicle booking system, for a trial period of up to 18 months for:
 - a. Vans and large trailers using the Recycling Centres for Household Waste (RCHW).
 - b. All vehicle types accessing the Rayleigh RCHW
- 2.3 Note that any decision on permanent adoption of a booking system beyond the maximum trial period of 18 months will be subject to a separate decision following evaluation of the trial.

3 Background and Proposal

- 3.1 Essex County Council (ECC) is the statutory Waste Disposal Authority (WDA) and is required to make places available for residents to dispose of their household waste. ECC fulfils this through the provision of 21 Recycling Centre for Household Waste (RCHW). The operation and delivery of an efficient and effective RCHW service contributes to ECC strategic commitment to a high quality environment and by maximising recycling and reuse reduces the greenhouse gas emissions coming from waste management.
- 3.2 The current RCHW service operating model was introduced in October 2016 (Cabinet decision FP/556/08/16) to tackle the illegal disposal of business waste at the sites. The service operating model only allows for the deposit of household waste and limited quantities of home DIY construction waste at the RCHW sites, and restricts vans, large trailers, and home DIY construction waste to the larger sites only. Although these measures have improved the capacity of the service, benefits have reduced over recent years. Indications are that business waste has started to appear at sites and demand during peak hours at some sites exceeds the efficient operating capacity.
- 3.3 Peak hour queuing at RCHWs has led to longer waiting times, local congestion, operational inefficiency, reduced user satisfaction and lower recycling performance. Although recent operational changes have helped the situation it is apparent that congestion remains an issue at some sites.
- 3.4 Usage of the RCHW service remains high despite significant investment by ECC in kerbside waste and recycling services. Actions aimed at encouraging users to access other free waste disposal options or visit sites at quieter times have had negligible impact on queuing levels.
- 3.5 During the Covid pandemic the high demand for RCHW services, combined with social distancing requirements further exacerbated existing issues. However, to maintain access at a time when waste collection services were being adversely impacted ECC took the decision not to follow other Waste Disposal Authorities and introduce a booking system as a means of tackling congestion. As an alternative ECC deployed additional staff and made temporary changes to site operations. Although this approach maintained service access and helped mitigate some of the most significant congestion impacts the service level for users during this period fell, and the impact of the RCHW operation on neighbouring properties and overall site performance worsened.
- 3.6 Service demand remains higher than pre-pandemic levels and despite the capacity returning to normal, following the removal of social distancing measures, problematic queuing remains an issue at many sites. The provision of additional infrastructure capacity to handle peak time use is unachievable in the medium term. Whilst the use of additional staff, as used during the pandemic, is not a solution as this achieves only a moderate improvement at the expense of onsite recycling performance.

- 3.7 It is proposed that ECC introduce booking system for RCHW's as a pilot to smooth out demand at peak times and to tackle demand issues and congestion. Peak times vary across RCHW's but typically impact weekends and towards the start and end of the operating day. The operational change proposed will require all vans and vehicles towing a large trailer to access an online system to pre-book RCHW visits on an agreed date and time.
- 3.8 In addition to the use of the system for van booking at the nine larger sites, it is proposed that the system is also initially trialled for cars at the Rayleigh RCHW. This reflects the specific capacity and queuing issues identified at this site and would enable a more extensive use of the system to be tested and trialled.
- 3.9 It is proposed that the pilot is launched in February 2022 to allow for a period of configuration and testing before the pilot is launched. An interim evaluation will be undertaken in Jun 2022 and a full evaluation and assessment of the pilot will be concluded in December 2022.
- 3.10 RCHW booking systems adopted elsewhere have demonstrated effectiveness at minimising queuing and congestion at sites by restricting service access so it is better aligned with the operational capacity of the site. Although this may have a negative impact on users, by requiring them to pre-book their visit and limiting access, it has the benefit of reducing user waiting times. A booking system would enable ECC to manage throughput at sites more effectively, so they remain within efficient operating capabilities
- 3.11 It is not appropriate to launch an all vehicle all site booking approach initially without first understanding the impact of a pilot. The proposed pilot will focus on users who are more likely to have the greater impact on service capacity at critical sites. It is proposed a trial on-line vehicle booking system is therefore adopted requiring vans and large trailers to pre-book access to the sites. This will operate at the nine sites listed in appendix 1 that currently accept vans and large trailers. These vehicle types will continue to be excluded from all other sites.
- 3.12 Vans and large trailers are being targeted as they contribute disproportionately to congestion levels as they generally take up a large amount of space on site and spend longer periods of time on site unloading. A booking system will enable ECC to better manage access across the operating day to mitigate queuing by reducing the number of these vehicles types accessing the sites at the busiest times and manage flow rate.
- 3.13 Work has been carried out on preparing a technical solution to allow vehicle bookings to be made online. This system is in place and future licence and other costs for the pilot can be accommodated within existing budgets.
- 3.14 Changes to the pilot may be necessary during the period of the pilot to ensure operational feedback and observations are considered and a robust approach can be tested prior to any future decision on adoption. Should this be the case, a further decision paper will be prepared detailing the changes.

- 3.15 The trial will last for 18 months and be subject to periodic review, evaluation and refinement. At the end of the pilot a full evaluation will be made and if a recommendation to permanently adopt a booking system is made this will be subject to the appropriate governance and consultation process.

4 Links to our Strategic Ambitions

- 4.1 This report links to the following aims in the Essex Vision to 'Develop our County sustainably'
- 4.2 Approving the recommendations in this report will have the following impact on the Council's ambition to be net carbon neutral by 2030:
- Through the better alignment of vehicle flow with site capacity vehicle queuing time at sites will be reduced which will have a positive impact on the emissions from vehicles using the sites. Improving the operational efficiency of sites is also likely to have a positive impact on the landfill disposal diversion achieved
- 4.3 This report links to the following strategic priorities in the Organisational Strategy 'Everyone's Essex':
- A high quality environment

5 Options

5.1 Option 1: Do Nothing - Maintain current operating model (Not Recommended):

This is not recommended. By not making changes to the current operating model it is likely queuing levels and local congestion will remain. This will continue to adversely impact service levels experienced by users, site performance and the local area around the sites.

5.2 Option 2: Trial an RCHW booking system as proposed (Recommended Approach):

This is the recommended approach. Booking systems adopted elsewhere have delivered benefits in reducing queuing and improving user experience through a moderate limiting of access at peak times, thereby spreading usage over the hours of operation. However, RCHW services operate in different ways across the Country and there is not a 'one size fits all' solution to the operational issues identified

The adoption of a trial targeting vehicle types that generally contribute disproportionately to site congestion levels and sites where queuing has been an issue allows for an approach to be fully tested. The flexible nature of the trial allows for small changes to be made to test an optimised approach. A trial also affords the opportunity to test approaches with users and to receive feedback

before any decision is taken on whether to adopt the changes on a permanent basis

The success measures that will be used to evaluate the pilot include:

Item	Success Measure
Off-site congestion incidents caused by RCHW queuing	Reduction in frequency
Waiting times to access recycling centres	Reduction in waiting times
Local fly tipping levels	No impact
Suspected business waste usage	Reduced frequency
Unloading times	20 minutes or less, broadly adopted and in practice
Number of public complaints	Does not exceed pre-pilot levels

5.3 Option 3: Trial an RCHW booking system at all sites and for all vehicle types (Not Recommended):

This is not recommended. The current levels of queuing and congestion observed are unlikely to warrant a booking system of this nature which would impact all users at all sites.

6 Issues for consideration

6.1 Financial implications

6.1.1 The primary purpose for this business change is to smooth the level of demand being seen at sites at peak times across the day reducing both the level of congestion and queuing times at recycling centres, enhancing the level of service performance for residents that use the sites.

6.1.2 Due to the nature of the service, where individual resident behaviour is difficult to anticipate as a result of these changes, the impact of the booking system on demand placed on the service is difficult to predict. Whilst it may be an enabler to future efficiencies, there is no firm evidence to base this on, and currently it is anticipated that the service will be in a no better/no worse position in terms of the volume of waste and the types of waste that are currently tipped at sites. Should there be an adverse financial impact as a result then the service will need to mitigate from within the existing budget envelope.

6.1.3 The cost of installing and operating the booking system is containable within existing resources both in terms of staff time taken and within the current budget envelope for the service. The estimated cost for licences, printing and web content is approximately £12,500.

6.1.4 The financial assumptions and actual performance will be monitored throughout the trial period and findings will be used to inform the long-term decision for which formal approval will need to be sought.

6.2 Legal implications

6.2.1 The Environmental Protection Act 1990 requires ECC to provide reasonably accessible places for residents to dispose of their household waste free of charge. The changes proposed are being implemented to evaluate the effectiveness of a booking system at alleviating congestion on and around sites and are fully compliant with ECC's obligations under the Act.

6.2.2 The operation changes proposed are for a trial period. Any permanent change to site policy or operations will be subject to a further decision which will be taken in accordance with ECC's policy and governance processes.

7 Equality and Diversity Considerations

7.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty applies to the Council when it makes decisions. The duty requires us to have regard to the need to:

- (a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act. In summary, the Act makes discrimination etc. on the grounds of a protected characteristic unlawful
- (b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- (c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

7.2 The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, gender, and sexual orientation. The Act states that 'marriage and civil partnership' is not a relevant protected characteristic for (b) or (c) although it is relevant for (a).

7.3 This decision will require users of certain RCHW sites and/or using certain vehicle types to pre-book access to the service via an online tool. Those with a disability affecting their capacity to access the online tool will be able to access the booking system via an assisted route. Blue Badge holders driving vans top access the service will be exempt from the booking requirements, and will continue to be able to access all RCHW sites in accordance with the existing policy

7.4 The equality impact assessment indicates that the proposals in this report will not have a disproportionately adverse impact on any people with a particular characteristic.

8 List of Appendices

Appendix 1: RCHW Site Detail
Appendix 2: Terms and Conditions
Appendix 3: EqlA

The 'sign off' boxes below are deleted for cabinet reports but not for CMAs.

I approve the above recommendations set out above for the reasons set out in the report.	Date 17/01/2022
Councillor Malcolm Buckley, Cabinet Member for Waste Reduction and Recycling	

In consultation with:

Role	Date
Andrew Cook Interim Executive Director for Place	09.12.2021
Executive Director, Corporate Services (S151 Officer)	11.01.2022
Stephanie Mitchener on behalf of Nicole Wood	
Director, Legal and Assurance (Monitoring Officer)	16.12.2021
Laura Edwards on behalf of Paul Turner	

Appendix 1: RCHW Site Detail

Site	Vehicle Acceptance Criteria	Waste Acceptance Criteria
Pitsea	Cars, trailers and vans (max 3500Kg)	All Household waste & limited quantities of construction and demolition (DIY) waste from a resident's own property
Braintree		
Coxtie Green		
Springfield		
Shrub End		
Harlow		
Maldon		
Clacton		
Saffron Walden		
Witham	Cars and single axle (small) trailers*	Household waste only, No construction, demolition (DIY) waste allowed
Mountnessing		
Canvey Island		
South Woodham Ferrers		
Mersea Island		
Chigwell		
Waltham Abbey		
Burnham on Crouch		
Dovercourt		
Kirby Le Soken		
Lawford		
Rayleigh	Cars and single axle (small) trailers only*	All Household waste Limited quantities of construction and demolition (DIY) waste from a resident's own property

*Blue Badge holders driving a van are permitted access to these sites

Appendix 2: Terms and Conditions

Main T&Cs

- The waste is from your household and is not generated through any business activity
- You are a resident of Statutory Essex (you are **not** a resident of Southend Borough, Thurrock or any London Council)
- You confirm you will bring both proof of address and your booking confirmation with you
- You will be allocated a slot to visit the Recycling Centre. All vehicles must unload waste within 20 minutes of accessing the sites. If you choose to visit towards the end of the timeslot, you must arrive at least 15 minutes prior to the end of the booking slot

The above T&Cs will need to be manually accepted by users (physically ticking a box). The bullet points below will be included in a link to 'full Terms and Conditions'.

Full T&Cs

- A valid email address must be provided to complete your booking and receive your booking confirmation
- Your booking confirmation must be shown to site staff prior to unloading waste, or on request
- Your data will be held for up to 12 months for the purpose of monitoring usage.
- Excessive use of sites may lead to access being withdrawn or limited. We reserve the right to cancel any multiple bookings in a 7 day period that are deemed as excessive usage
- If using a hire vehicle, you must bring a copy of the hire agreement alongside the booking confirmation and proof of address
- Abusive or threatening behaviour towards site staff will not be tolerated
- You accept that only the registered vehicle will be allowed on site at the designated time
- Essex County Council does not accept liability for damage to property, personal injury or death unless the damage, personal injury or death was caused by an ECC vehicle
- The information you provide will be used for the specific purpose of fulfilling the application you are completing, and any subsequent administration required as part of that process. It may also be used for management information and statistics to assess the service and measure future provision. All your information is processed in accordance with any applicable data protection legislation and regulations. For full details on how we use, store and share your info please see our [Privacy Notice](#).