

Equalities Comprehensive Impact Assessment v3 - optional ECIA review

Reference: ECIA574067719

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Executive summary

Title of policy / decision: Recycling Centre Booking Process

Policy / decision type: Cabinet Decision

Overview of policy / decision: Context:

Following successful pilots for vans at nine large Recycling Centres and for all vehicles at Rayleigh Recycling Centre in 2022, the Recycling Centre Booking process pilot was extended to all 21 sites for all vehicles in March 2023. During the pilot period, pedestrians, cyclists and blue badge holders were not required to book in advance.

In Autumn 2023, ECC carried out a 6-week public consultation on a proposal to retain the booking process permanently. The consultation received over 18,123 responses. There were multiple ways the consultation was communicated with the public. (Direct emails, telephone number published via flyers and paper versions in 74 libraries, Easy Read versions on paper and online, message on ECC Contact Centre phone number, Love Essex website, stakeholders were given a communications toolkit for onward distribution, staff at recycling sites were given a briefing and flyers with information and banners on sites. There were also radio commercials and adverts on the back of buses for six weeks). High level consultation findings demonstrated that:

- 58% of respondents are in favour of keeping the car booking system for recycling centres.
- 72% of respondents are in favour of keeping the van booking system for recycling centres.

Following an initial evaluation of the early phases of the pilot in December 2022, ECC has also carried out a further evaluation of the operational impact of the pilot booking process, published in a Final Evaluation Report.

Decision:

The recommendation is:

- To retain the booking process at all 21 Recycling Centres, across all operating hours, for all vehicles. Pedestrians, cyclists and blue badge holders will not be required to book in advance.

Rationale:

- The booking process has helped manage demand across the network to reduce queues and congestion that were being experienced at peak times
- Managing demand across the recycling centre network has in turn delivered additional benefits. For example, better on-site safety and a more positive environment to encourage recycling, with staff more available to help customers and advise on where different type of waste should be deposited
- Customer satisfaction with the booking system and ease of access, queuing and traffic control is high based on user survey results
- The results of the public consultation show a 58% net agreement with the proposal to retain county-wide for cars, compared to 39% in net disagreement. For vans, this rises to 72% net agreement, with net disagreement falling to 14%.
- The booking system has unlocked a direct means of engaging with residents, with users having consented to be contacted about recycling centre service changes, and the booking system itself a platform to share news such as site closures. When a slot is booked (either via our telephone booking system or online) it only allows the user to book available slots so if a site has a planned closure for a set period of time then that slot is not

available for booking).

ECC recognises that all sites have different characteristics with different patterns of demand and safe operating capacity. Bookable capacity is accordingly set at a site level and will be regularly reviewed. Whilst queuing is not a problem at all times, and some sites experience this less than others, all of our sites do have long waiting times at peak periods. Therefore, ECC proposes to require bookings at all sites and across all operating hours to prevent demand being moved from high demand locations to lower capacity sites, leading to an increase in congestion. Whilst a more flexible approach to bookings might be preferred by some residents, the majority of residents support retaining a booking process at all sites and for all operating hours. The Service considers moving away from clear and consistent countywide service is likely to cause confusion over what the process and rules are at each site. A booking process has also helped the Service to understand and plan for patterns of demand and servicing needs at sites that are required to close in order to safely undertake servicing activities, sites without a booking process would lose this operational benefit reducing the overall efficiency of the Service

What outcome(s) are you hoping to achieve?: Strategic priority: 'Help Create Great Places to Grow Up, Live and Work' – Better management of service demand across the operating day will enhance the user experience of the service by reducing congestion and queues, improve operational effectiveness and increasing the opportunity to segregate waste for recycling and reduce waste disposed to landfill.

Executive Director responsible for policy / decision: Mark Ash (Climate, Environment and Customer Services)

Cabinet Member responsible for policy / decision: Cllr Peter Schwier (Climate Czar, Environment, Waste Reduction and Recycling)

Is this a new policy / decision or a change to an existing one?: Change to an existing policy / decision

How will the impact of the policy / decision be monitored and evaluated?: During the pilot, a range of measures have been used to assess the operational impact of the booking process. The interim and final evaluation reports have been published.

Following permanent adoption of a booking process, the service will continue to monitor a range of factors that will be used to regularly assess the booking process to ensure it is working effectively. These will include:

- Observed frequency of off-site congestion incidents caused by RCHW queuing
- Observed waiting times to access recycling centres
- Observed attempts to access without booking
- Resident experience whilst accessing the recycling centres through surveys
- Reported incidents and causation impact on local fly tipping
- Explore how the booking process can further enhance the customer experience, for example enabling users with accessibility needs to pre-request on-site assistance
- Engage with networks and forums who can communicate with protected groups and support the public who require on-site assistance, telephone bookings, digital access. (E.g. Meaningful Lives Matter, parents and carers forums and Collaborate Essex Forum run by Healthwatch).

Will this policy / decision impact on:

Service users: Yes

Employees: Yes

Wider community or groups of people: No

If the policy decision impacts on employees, provide details here and include potential impacts on identified groups later in the form: The introduction of the vehicle booking process during the pilot has had a positive impact on site staff by reducing queuing times and congestion incidents. Staff have reported that customers are less frustrated when accessing the service because they have not been waiting in queues. In the consultation response, users have commented that staff have more time to direct the public to the right recycling

bins. Site staff have been supported throughout the change with regular communications, bulletins and on-site briefings.

What strategic priorities will this policy / decision support?: High Quality Environment

Which strategic priorities does this support? - Environment: Minimise waste

What geographical areas of Essex will the policy / decision affect?: All Essex

Digital accessibility

Is the new or revised policy linked to a digital service (website, system or application)?: Yes

What steps you have taken to meet the digital accessibility: Accessibility testing carried out by Tech Services (TS). TS queries and responses obtained prior to initial pilot launched in February 2022. No changes to accessibility since initial approval when it was tested to WCAG2.1 standard. Alternative route to book provided for any residents unable to access solution digitally (telephone booking number published on Love Essex website and also in the 74 libraries with a paper toolkit of the consultation and flyers, pop up banner, staff on sites have the information via flyers and banners and stakeholders were given a communications toolkit for onward distribution). Circa 500 telephone bookings per month are made using this option. The ECC Contact Centre had a message during the consultation directing people to various methods of accessing the consultation and how to book via telephone and website. Consultation response shows that around half of those using the telephone option prefer to do so with the remainder using the telephone option due to a lack of internet access at home or on a smart device.

How have you tested accessibility?: This is an existing system provision previously approved by Tech Services and in use for ECC Recycling Centre Household Waste service users since 2022. (WCAG2.1 standard) If the booking process is adopted permanently, ECC will review the booking technology to ensure it is fit for purpose in the longer term. Accessibility testing will form part of any future booking system selection and testing.

How will you monitor and maintain accessibility once it has gone live?: Any changes, or requirement to change, regarding accessibility will be based on observations or any change to appropriate regulatory/legislative requirements. This approach will be maintained by the Waste Team who will manage the BAU operating of the current system.

Equalities - Groups with protected characteristics

Age

Nature of impact: None

Disability - learning disability

Nature of impact: None

Disability - mental health issues

Nature of impact: None

Disability - physical impairment

Nature of impact: None

Disability - sensory impairment

Nature of impact: None

Sex

Nature of impact: None

Gender reassignment

Nature of impact: None

Marriage / civil partnership

Nature of impact: None

Pregnancy / maternity

Nature of impact: None

Race

Nature of impact: None

Religion / belief

Nature of impact: None

Sexual orientation

Nature of impact: None

Rationale for assessment, including data used to assess the impact: When assessing potential impacts, the key protected groups considered were age, disability and race based on the assessment and evidence produced from our pilot, trial and public consultation for vehicle booking system at RCHWs.

For example:

Blue badge holders under Disability group are not required to book an appointment at recycling centres, therefore there is no change to how they access the recycling centres. 63% of blue badge holders who completed the public consultation survey said they agreed with the proposal to retain a booking process.

Staff now stationed on the gate, no longer needed to manage traffic on-site as a result of bookable slots and management of traffic flow therefore this provides an additional benefit of supporting users who need assistance and providing information to encouraging recycling.

The Waste team is exploring how the booking process can further enhance the customer experience. For example, enabling users with accessibility needs to pre-request on-site assistance.

The booking system (by telephone or internet) only accepts bookings when the site is open, therefore, avoiding bookings during site closure times and making best use of the public's time to ensure it is always open for their booked slot.

There is an alternative telephone booking system offered for those who cannot access the internet via the ECC Contact Centre on 0345 7430430, 8.30am to 5pm, Monday to Friday.

Of the 18,123 consultees who replied to the public consultation, 1% indicated they have booked the recycling centre by telephone (via ECC's contact centre). The most common reason for booking via phone (as opposed to online) is personal preference (54% of the 1% prefer booking via phone). Just under a quarter of the 1% indicated they do not have internet access at home and 18% of the 1% indicated they do not have internet access on their mobile phone. In the interests of keeping the booking system as accessible as possible, ECC will continue to provide the telephone booking service.

- No equality impacts have been identified in how different age groups access the recycling centre service. Consultation responses were analysed by age group of respondent to assess how different groups feel about

retaining a booking process permanently

- The service engaged with Traveller Services to determine if a booking process requiring a postcode introduced any impacts on members of the Traveller community. This assessment indicated that providing a postcode was not a barrier to access. Operational staff were provided with guidance on how to support members of the Traveller community wishing to access the service and the Traveller Unit were provided with information to provide in community settings

What actions have already been taken to mitigate any negative impacts?: Blue badge holders are not required to book, but impact is further mitigated by providing an alternative route for bookings provided by telephone (and clearly signposted on ECC website, recycling centre staff and community 'hubs' such as libraries, parish newsletters, local Age UK networks) for those service users who are unable to access the booking solution due to an impairment or lack of digital access.

The service engaged with Traveller Services to determine if a booking process requiring a postcode introduced any impacts on members of the Traveller community. This assessment indicated that providing a postcode was not a barrier to access. Operational staff were provided with guidance on how to support members of the Traveller community wishing to access the service and the Traveller Unit were provided with information to provide in community settings.

Levelling up - Priority areas & cohorts

Children and adults with SEND, learning disabilities or mental health conditions (taking an all-age approach)

Nature of impact: None

Children on Free School Meals

Nature of impact: None

Working families

Nature of impact: None

Young adults (16-25 who have not been in education, training or employment for around 6-12 months)

Nature of impact: None

Residents of Harlow

Nature of impact: None

Residents of Jaywick and Clacton

Nature of impact: None

Residents of Harwich

Nature of impact: None

Residents of Basildon (Town) housing estates

Nature of impact: None

Residents of Canvey Island

Nature of impact: None

Residents of Colchester (Town) - Housing Estates

Nature of impact: None

Residents of Rural North of the Braintree District

Nature of impact: None

Rationale for assessment, including data used to assess the impact: The decision to implement a permanent booking process will be applied consistently in all areas of the county and as a universal policy, therefore there are no specific impacts on levelling up areas and cohorts.

What actions have already been taken to mitigate any negative impacts?: To encourage a broad response to the public consultation on proposals to retain a booking process permanently, the consultation included:

- an Easy Read version of the consultation proposal and survey, and communications promoting the consultation activity were distributed to advocacy groups for adults with SEND, Learning Disabilities and Mental Health conditions.
- A dynamic, multi channel communications programme was deployed across all areas and levelling areas. The communications toolkits promoting the consultation were sent out for onward distribution (e.g. 74 libraries received paper versions of the consultation with guidance).

Bookable capacity is accordingly set at a site level and will be regularly reviewed. Whilst queuing is not a problem at all times, and some sites experience this less than others, all of our sites do have long waiting times at peak periods which can impact on access to the service, the public highway, and neighbouring homes and businesses. Therefore ECC proposes to require bookings at all sites and across all operating hours to prevent demand being moved from high demand locations to lower capacity sites, leading to an increase in congestion. Following permanent adoption of a booking process, the service will continue to monitor a range of factors that will be used to regularly assess the booking process to ensure it is working effectively – this will include review of bookable capacity at high demand locations in Levelling Up areas such as Colchester, Canvey Island, Clacton.

Equalities - Inclusion health groups and other priority groups

Refugees / asylum seekers

Nature of impact: None

Homeless / rough sleepers

Nature of impact: None

People who experience drug and alcohol dependence

Nature of impact: None

Offenders / ex-offenders

Nature of impact: None

Victims of modern slavery

Nature of impact: None

Carers

Nature of impact: None

Looked after children / care leavers

Nature of impact: None

The armed forces community (serving personnel and their families, veterans, reservists and cadets)

Nature of impact: None

People who are unemployed / economically inactive

Nature of impact: None

People on low income

Nature of impact: None

Sex workers

Nature of impact: None

Ethnic minorities

Nature of impact: None

Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller communities

Nature of impact: None

People with multiple complex needs or multi-morbidities

Nature of impact: None

Rationale for assessment, including data used to assess the impact: The rationale for our assessment is that the vehicle booking system is equally accessible for all of the above groups.

The service engaged with Traveller Services to determine if a booking process requiring a postcode introduced any impacts on members of the Traveller community. This assessment indicated that providing a postcode was not a barrier to access. Operational staff were provided with guidance on how to support members of the Traveller community wishing to access the service and the Traveller Unit were provided with information to provide in community settings

Operational staff are provided with guidance on how to support homeless service users wishing to access the service.

In order to generate a broad response to public consultation on proposals to permanently retain a booking process, alternative formats and an Easy Read version of the consultation proposal and survey were made available, and communications promoting the consultation activity were distributed to advocacy groups for a range of communities including those identified as priority groups.

What actions have already been taken to mitigate any negative impacts?:

Equalities - Geographical Groups

People living in areas of high deprivation

Nature of impact: None

People living in rural or isolated areas

Nature of impact: None

People living in coastal areas

Nature of impact: None

People living in urban areas

Nature of impact: None

Rationale for assessment, including data used to assess the impact: The rationale for our assessment is that the vehicle booking system is equally accessible to all those groups listed above. Using the service will not impact negatively on these groups.

What actions have already been taken to mitigate any negative impacts?:

Families

Family formation (e.g. to become or live as a couple, the ability to live with or apart from children)

Nature of impact: None

Families going through key transitions e.g. becoming parents, getting married, fostering or adopting, bereavement, redundancy, new caring responsibilities, onset of a long-term health condition

Nature of impact: None

Family members' ability to play a full role in family life, including with respect to parenting and other caring responsibilities

Nature of impact: None

Families before, during and after couple separation

Nature of impact: None

Families most at risk of deterioration of relationship quality and breakdown

Nature of impact: None

Rationale for assessment, including data used to assess the impact: The rationale for our assessment is that the vehicle booking system is equally accessible to all those groups listed above. Using the service will not impact negatively on these groups.

What actions have already been taken to mitigate any negative impacts?:

Crime & Disorder

Crime and disorder

Nature of impact: None

The misuse of drugs, alcohol and other substances

Nature of impact: None

Re-offending

Nature of impact: None

Serious violence

Nature of impact: None

Rationale for assessment, including data used to assess the impact:

N/A

(If negative impact assessed) What actions will be undertaken to mitigate negative impacts, including timescales:

What actions have already been taken to mitigate any negative impacts?:

N/A

How could you strengthen any positive impact(s)?:

Climate

Does your decision / policy involve development or re-development of buildings or infrastructure?: No

Does your decision / policy take place in, or make use of, existing buildings or infrastructure?: No

Does your decision / policy involve elements connected to transport, travel or vehicles? This includes travel needs / requirements of both service users and staff (including staff you're planning to recruit): Yes

Where are staff or service users coming from and how are they travelling?: Staff:

We are not recruiting additional staff as a result of this decision and there are no changes to existing facilities provided to service users (recycling centres). There may be small operational efficiencies because the booking process enables the service to plan for operational servicing, reducing vehicle waiting time and the need for additional visits or vehicles to service the sites.

Service users:

21 recycling centres are positioned in a variety of locations across Essex. Some are rural , and some are accessible off main roads. At peak times, all sites experienced some incidents of queuing and congestion. This was affecting neighbouring properties, impacting the environment through increased green house gas and air pollutant emissions from idling vehicles. Since the introduction of the vehicle booking system at the sites the traffic congestion has reduced (noted by user survey results and operational observations of incidents of significant congestion).

If car travel is unavoidable, are you specifying electric cars and vehicles?: No

What is your transition plan to introduce electric vehicles?: N/A

Are you undertaking a procurement exercise?: No

Does your decision / policy involve the purchase of goods or materials?: No

Will any waste be generated by this decision? This includes waste from construction, waste generated by service users / staff, and waste generated by replacing existing products / materials with new: No

Nature of impact

Built Environment / Energy: None

Sustainable Transport / Travel: None

Waste: None

Rationale for assessment, including data used to assess the impact: It is anticipated that reduced waiting times and an improved customer experience at Recycling Centres will encourage users to segregate a greater proportion of their waste for recycling and reuse, which will improve recycling performance at recycling centres.

What actions have already been taken to mitigate any negative impacts?:

Action plan to address and monitor adverse impacts

Does your ECIA indicate that the policy or decision would have a medium or high adverse impact on one or more of the groups / areas identified?: No

Details of person completing the form

I confirm that this has been completed based on the best information available and in following ECC guidance: I confirm that this has been completed based on the best information available and in following ECC guidance

Date ECIA completed: 04/01/2024

Name of person completing the ECIA: Juliana Dempsey

Email address of person completing the ECIA: juliana.dempsey@essex.gov.uk

Your function: Climate, Environment and Customer Services

Your service area: TDS

Your team: TDS

Are you submitting this ECIA on behalf of another function, service area or team?: No

Email address of Head of Service: jason.searles@essex.gov.uk