

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – PROPOSED RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY:

Susan Carey, Cabinet Member for Environment

DECISION NO:

21/00123

For publication Yes

Subject Matter / Title of Decision

Booking to visit a Household Waste Recycling Centre

Decision:

As Cabinet Member for Environment, I agree:

For the Waste Management service to permanently operate a booking system for customers to access Kent County Council's Household Waste Recycling Centres.

For the Corporate Director for Growth, Environment and Transport to keep progress of the booking system under review and to inherit the main delegations via the Officer Scheme of Delegation to make any further operational changes to the booking system to maximise customer service.

Reason(s) for decision:

After a period of temporary closure to adhere to the government's Covid-19 'stay at home' message, Kent County Council (KCC) re-opened the Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) on 15 May 2020 employing the use of a booking system.

Whilst the booking system was introduced to help manage demand on the Centres in response to social distancing and revised workplace rules, it has provided some additional benefits, as follows:

- Communications with customers are improved, for example, informing directly of any potential service issues/ emergency closures, avoiding unnecessary journeys
- Managed throughput of visits, allowing staff more time to help customers, rather than managing traffic queues
- Reduced traffic queueing into the HWRCs, improving Air Quality Management
- Reduced queueing on high-speed roads such as the A2, A256 and A25
- Reduced queueing and disruption particularly at the Centres where there have been complaints from Kent Police, bus operators, local residents and customers queueing to access the service
- Certainty that customers will be able to access the HWRCs, reducing wasted car journeys and spend less time at the site
- HWRC maintenance can be planned in line with customer demand, rather than disrupting the service at times that customers are accessing the Centre
- Reduced risk of incidents and near misses at previously congested Centres, for both customers, HWRC staff and haulage contractors
- Reduced contamination rates
- Increased recycling rates, as staff have more time to help customers dispose of waste in the correct containers / areas
- Customers are making fewer journeys but with more waste, benefiting the environment
- People are "thinking more" about whether to dispose of waste, or whether to reuse or sell items in the first instance

Periodic survey feedback showed that many customers found booking convenient and useful, whilst

others preferred to just 'turn up and go'. As a result, the public consultation was undertaken to gain more in-depth views from the public and stakeholders on the future use of a booking system to access the HWRCs.

There were more respondents that felt positively about the future use of a booking system than negatively. Of those that felt negatively, the main reason was because they wanted to be able to visit an HWRC on the day.

It was not considered that any new information had been presented in the consultation findings that would lead to a withdrawal of the booking system to access the HWRCs.

The Covid-19 pandemic remains a risk. Not only does the booking system enable demand to be managed in response to the pandemic, if restrictions change again in the future, but it also provides many further benefits to support its ongoing use (as detailed above).

Since it's been in operation, many positive changes and environmental improvements have been made to the booking system in response to customer and contractor feedback. Further suggested improvements have been identified from the public consultation and from the HWRC contractors, which can and indeed have started, including 'on the day' booking. There are also significant opportunities for integration with other systems, to enable a more digitalised and well-managed service for customers.

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

A six-week public consultation seeking views on the future use of a booking system ran between the 19 August to 30 September 2021. Various communication methods were utilised to ensure a broad range of target audiences were engaged with, including users and non-users of the service.

In total 10,705 responses were received. 10,635 questionnaires were completed and 52 emails / letters from people with comments and 18 voicemails with comments were received.

The proposed decision will be discussed at the Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee meeting on 18 January 2022.

Any alternatives considered and rejected:

As part of the consultation analysis, officers considered the following alternative options that were deemed as not appropriate:

1. Return to access to the HWRCs without the requirement to book
2. Implement a hybrid booking system

Any interest declared when the decision was taken and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer:

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signed

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date