

## Bath & North East Somerset Council

DECISION MAKER:	Cllr David Wood , Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services	
DECISION DATE:	On or after 21 <sup>st</sup> January 2022	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
		E 3330
TITLE:	Retention of the Recycling Centre Booking System	
WARD:	All	
<b>AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM</b>		
<b>List of attachments to this report: None</b>		

### 1 THE ISSUE

- 1.1 As part of the re-opening of the recycling Centres during COVID-19 restrictions in 2020, a booking system was introduced at the Midsomer Norton and Bath Recycling Centres. Residents book online to ensure a swift visit at an allocated time. This booking system stopped the long queues which build up to use the site which are a source of frustration to visitors, and cause congestion on the surrounding road network.
- 1.2 The booking system received positive feedback from site users. Surveys indicate overwhelming support for it to remain in place now that COVID restrictions have been removed as the system eases congestion, speeds up visits and makes for a more pleasurable customer experience.
- 1.3 Retaining the booking system provides several benefits; residents have certainty that they will be able to access the site at the time booked and no wasted trips as the site is too busy; it reduces vehicle queues and the associated pollution from idling engines, alongside removing any congestion on the surrounding road network.

### 2 RECOMMENDATION

**The Cabinet member for Neighbourhood Services is asked to;**

- 2.1 Retain the booking system for residents using Old Welton and Bath Recycling Centres on an ongoing basis, following the positive feedback received through the Recycling Centre Booking System Consultation.

- 2.2 Keep Keynsham Recycling Centre as a site with no booking system, so that residents can access this at any time during opening hours.

### **3 THE REPORT**

- 3.1 Prior to the booking systems being introduced residents would visit any of the three recycling centres and join a queue to enter. At peak times these queues could be significant and would be a significant source of frustration to site users.
- 3.2 In Bath traffic regularly queued on the main A4 Upper Bristol Road and was always of significant concern to the police, requiring them to assist in moving the traffic on the main A4 road at busy times. Similarly, in Midsomer Norton traffic would regularly queue back onto the Radstock Road, causing access issues to businesses on the neighbouring trading estate and queues on the main A road.
- 3.3 In July 2020 as part of the COVID reopening plans a booking system was introduced at Midsomer Norton and Bath Recycling Centres for resident's use, the primary aim was to manage the reduced number of people who were allowed on-site due to social distancing.
- 3.4 Keynsham Recycling Centre continued to provide the option for residents to visit without the need for booking. At Keynsham's location queuing traffic can more easily be accommodated on the neighbouring industrial estate without impacting on the surrounding road network, and a new queuing system was introduced here.
- 3.5 Positive feedback was received from members of the public regarding the benefits of the booking system, with requests received for it to remain in place once the COVID restrictions had been lifted. Benefits cited were that visits were quicker, and they did not waste time or fuel sat waiting in queues, or visiting the site and finding the queues too long to wait or already closed.
- 3.6 A Consultation was carried out on the council website during January and February 2021, from which 87% of respondents wanted to retain the booking system at Bath & Midsomer Norton once social distancing had been removed.
- 3.7 The booking system was introduced during a period of peak recycling centre demand being experienced across the Country following the initial lockdown closure, and initially required social distancing measures which reduced capacity, both of which led to high demand of booking slots.
- 3.8 Some complaints were raised about availability of slots, and from the respondents to the consultation who had not used Bath or Midsomer Norton since the booking system had been introduced, 40% said it was due to lack of available slots. Although, for those residents who had visited the site satisfaction levels of the waiting times between when a resident booked, and the actual appointment were high with 94% either satisfied or very satisfied.
- 3.9 The number of slots available at both sites has now been significantly increased following the removal of social distancing measures. The frequency of booking slots has been increased from every 30 minutes to every 15 minutes, and the number of cars per slot has also been increased. When booking now there is usually availability across the whole week, including the weekends and slots are regularly available for same day visits.

- 3.10 The on-line booking process received positive feedback, with over 98% of those respondents who had used Bath or Midsomer Norton finding the booking system easy or very easy to use.
- 3.11 As part of the consultation a question was asked about whether the booking system should be introduced at the Keynsham Recycling Centre, this was supported by 43% of respondents, 12% of the respondents said no, with the remaining stating they were unsure.
- 3.12 During the time that the booking system has been in place no problems with queuing on the highway have been experienced at Bath or Midsomer Norton, resulting in improved traffic flow on the road network and reducing localised pollution from idling engines.
- 3.13 Following the positive feedback and the benefits of reduced traffic congestion and queuing seen as a result of the booking system, it is recommended that it remains in place at Bath and Midsomer Norton. To enable residents the flexibility of using a site without booking it is recommended that it is currently not introduced at Keynsham Recycling centre.

#### **4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS**

- 4.1 The Environmental Protection Act 1990 (EPA) section 51 1(b) states that 'It shall be the duty of each waste disposal authority to arrange ....for places to be provided at which persons resident in its area may deposit their household waste and for the disposal of waste so deposited'.
- 4.2 The legislation does not specify the manner in which places to dispose of household waste should be operated.

#### **5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)**

- 5.1 There are no additional resource implication to retaining the booking system, as it is primarily a self-service form completed on-line. The on-site monitoring of booked vehicles can be carried out within existing resources.

#### **6 RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 6.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance.

#### **7 EQUALITIES**

- 7.1 An EIA has not been completed as the booking system does not change the provision of recycling centre to all groups and protected characteristics.
- 7.2 The booking system is on-line, but for any resident without access to the internet they can make a booking via Council Connect or via the One Stop Shops.

#### **8 CLIMATE CHANGE**

- 8.1 The booking system supports the climate emergency by reducing vehicle queuing to use the Midsomer Norton and Bath sites and the associated pollution

from idling engines, also reduces unnecessary car journeys to find the site is too busy.

## 9 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

9.1 **Introducing a booking system at all three Recycling Centres:** This was discounted to retain some flexibility so that if a resident cannot wait until a slot is available, they still have the option to visit one recycling centre. Due to its location Keynsham Recycling Centre is most suited to this as any queuing traffic can be managed without having a significant impact on the wider road network.

9.2 **Introducing a part time booking system only on certain days/times:** This was discounted due to the potential confusion it could cause to residents as to what days and times you needed to book, as well as frustration if they are turned away as arrive a time when they needed to book. Following the removal of COVID restrictions the number of slots available on both sites has increased, and if not already busy they are available to book and visit the site on the same day.

## 10 CONSULTATION

10.1 A public consultation was carried out on the Council's Have you Say website pages in January and February 2021.

10.2 This report has been approved by the Council's S151 Officer and Monitoring Officer

10.3 A further customer survey will be carried out in 12 months' time.

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<b>Background papers</b>	None
<b>Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format</b>	