

EXECUTIVE COUNCILLOR FOR WASTE AND TRADING STANDARDS

—

13 JULY 2021

HOUSEHOLD WASTE RECYCLING CENTRE OPERATION

COMMENTS FROM THE ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

On 13 July 2021, the Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee considered the report for the Household Waste Recycling Centre Operation, and unanimously supported Recommendations 1 and 3, but recommended that Recommendation 2 should be amended to *“looks at the removal, or fairer use of a registration system used for residents with vans and trailers”*.

The following points were highlighted:

- The Chairman of the Committee noted that he had received on 12 July 2021, correspondence from one of the site contractors which he then passed on to the Executive Councillor for Waste and Trading Standards and added his intention to consult the Executive Councillor on his decision before that is made.
- The booking system was introduced to control the number of daily visits to the Recycling Centres due to Covid and in line with reducing contact between staff and members of the public using the facilities.
- The system had been in place for the past 12 months; in line with the relaxation of social distancing guidelines (from the 19th July 2021) and in light of evidence that: the registration system was near its maximum capacity, thus preventing residents from making use of the service as they could not book a slot; the number of ‘no-shows’ after bookings were made (12-15% currently); and also considering that the system had failed on a number of occasions in the past 12 month period, there was a strong case for reverting to the previous model that allowed uncontrolled entrance to residents to enable better use of the sites.
- The demographic of the service users was taken under consideration to prevent commercial users from using these facilities. A system of pre-registration for vans and trailers was being considered.
- Members expressed concerns on the numbers of ‘no-shows’ and on the abuse of the facilities by trade and commercial users at the expense of taxpayers.
- Members suggested that following removal of the booking system, the service should be advertised as being accessible only to Lincolnshire residents and that spot checks should be implemented as a means of ensuring the appropriate use of the facilities.
- Assurance was sought that physical support would be provided to vulnerable residents in line with the Equality Act 2010, to enable the former to unload their vehicles. Members were pleased to hear that contractors have agreed to provide assistance to members of the public on a discretionary basis whilst continuing to adopt strict instructions in regards to supporting and prioritising the elderly and frail where possible (in line with staff number limitations).

- Members expressed concerns at the number of complaints of Boston residents in relation to the booking system for the facilities as well as the increase in fly-tipping. The profile of the local community was highlighted as including a low wage economy; residents living in small size accommodation (flats/ shared houses) which lack facility and space for storage of rubbish and recyclables; and a throwaway culture due to limited resources to invest in high quality items, which are disposed of when faulty. This economic profile was consistent with trade professions suggesting that the household vehicle could often be a commercial van. This social profile was also associated with varying working-hour patterns which often did not tie in with facilities' opening hours and bookable slots.
- Alternative suggestions for operating the service were made, including keeping the booking system in place, exploring the possibility of adopting a hybrid approach, installing an ANPR system at the entrances to sites, highlighting peak hours on the website, varying the open days, and extending the opening hours to seven days per week. However, it was recognised that this would entail increased costs and staffing resources, and that there was a need for the service to remain flexible and accessible to service users.