



COMMITTEE TITLE: AUDIT AND SCRUTINY

DATE: 20th March 2024

REPORT TITLE:	Essex County Council Recycling Centres
REPORT OF:	Director of Environment
REPORT IS FOR:	Information Only

REPORT SUMMARY

At Ordinary Council - 21st June 2023, the Motion was debated regarding Essex County Council introducing a policy of residents having to book to use the Recycling Centres in the Borough of Brentwood and across Essex from March 2023.

Ordinary Council resolved to ask the Audit & Scrutiny Committee to open an investigation into this policy, its impact on the number of fly-tips, the County Council's justification for this policy and the costs incurred to Brentwood taxpayers.

Essex state that the booking process is a cost-effective way to make optimum use of available capacity across the recycling network to support the needs of the current and growing population of Essex.

The Essex Officer recommendation to adopt the booking system was approved by Cabinet at Essex County Council Cabinet Meeting – 27th February 2024. [Click Here](#).

In conclusion, there does not appear to be a direct link between the numbers of fly tips that the Borough is experiencing, and the introduction of the booking system at the ECC Recycling Centres.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 1.1. At Ordinary Council - 21st June 2023 a Motion was debated regarding Essex County Council introducing a policy of residents having to book to use the Recycling Centres in the Borough of Brentwood and across Essex from March 2023.
- 1.2 Members raised concern that since March 2023, a continued escalation in fly-tipping has been observed, with many residents being turned away from the Recycling Centres if they have not made an appointment; Further, residents have also not been able to book appointments on the same day, with limited options for multiple trips.

- 1.3 Concern was also raised regarding that the Council is financially responsible for clearing fly-tips on public land, and it is therefore impacting the Council's financial position. Whilst Essex County Council might be making savings, they come at a greater cost to Brentwood Council taxpayers, given that clean-up costs are higher than the costs of legitimate waste disposal.
- 1.4 Ordinary Council resolved to ask the Audit & Scrutiny Committee to open an investigation into this policy, its impact on the number of fly-tips, the County Council's justification for this policy and the costs incurred to Brentwood taxpayers. The result of this investigation to be reported back to Ordinary Council.

Introduction of Booking System for Recycling Centres

- 1.5 Since 2022, Essex County Council has been running a pilot using Rayleigh Recycling Centre to understand if a booking process at the recycling centres can reduce queuing and local congestion, enhance operational efficiency, improve customer satisfaction, and encourage more recycling.
- 1.6 The final phase of the pilot introduced a booking process for all vehicles at all recycling centres in March 2023. During the operation of the pilot the approach has been adjusted in response to feedback from users and site operatives. This has dealt with many of the issues raised by Council Members in the Motion, and the responses are set out below:
 - Same day bookings were made available at all sites from the start of the extended pilot in March 2023. This enables users to make a booking as little as 15 minutes prior to arrival (subject to booking availability).
 - Essex users have not been limited on the number of visits they make (subject to booking availability) providing they are disposing of their own waste. For clarity, there is no restriction in the booking system on the number of bookings a user may make in a given period.
 - During the booking pilot no users from Essex have been refused entry because they have failed to book. Users without a booking may be asked to wait if the site is already at full capacity, but they will be given access as soon as possible.
 - During the pilot, pedestrians, cyclists and Blue Badge holders have not been required to book.

Evaluation by Essex County Council

- 1.7 To understand the operational impact of implementing a booking process, data was collected by Essex between 17 March and 30 September 2023, and a final evaluation report has been produced by ECC.
- 1.8 Overall, Essex concluded that the evaluation shows that the booking process has had a range of operational and customer benefits, particularly as a result of reducing queuing and congestion, with no discernible impact on perceived areas of concern such as fly-tipping and recycling rates.

- 1.9 The final evaluation report link is [Here](#). A summary of the key findings of the Final Evaluation Report are set out below:

Fly tipping

- 1.10 The impact of a booking process on the level of fly-tipping has been a key concern for some residents. No direct link has been identified between the introduction of the booking process and the level of reported fly-tipping in Essex.
- 1.11 Government national data indicates that fly-tipping fluctuates year on year. In January 2023 DEFRA undertook a study to explore if there were links between recycling centre booking systems and incidents of fly-tipping and did not find a link between booking systems and fly-tipping.
- 1.12 Analysis shows that fly-tipping was increasing prior to the roll-out of the booking process and has fluctuated throughout the pilot period, with no discernible pattern across the County.

User Feedback and surveys:

- 1.13 A public consultation was conducted by Essex for six weeks from 9 October to 19 November 2023. The purpose was to seek residents views on retaining a booking process. A total of 18,123 responses to the consultation were received from across the County.
- 1.14 Independent analysis of the consultation response indicates overall agreement to retain a booking system for cars was 58% (with 39% disagreeing) and for vans 72% agreed (with 14% disagreeing). Although levels of agreement varied by locality, the level of agreement to retain a booking system exceeded 50% for both cars and vans for residents of Brentwood, and users of the Coxtie Green and Mountnessing sites.

Current Essex Position

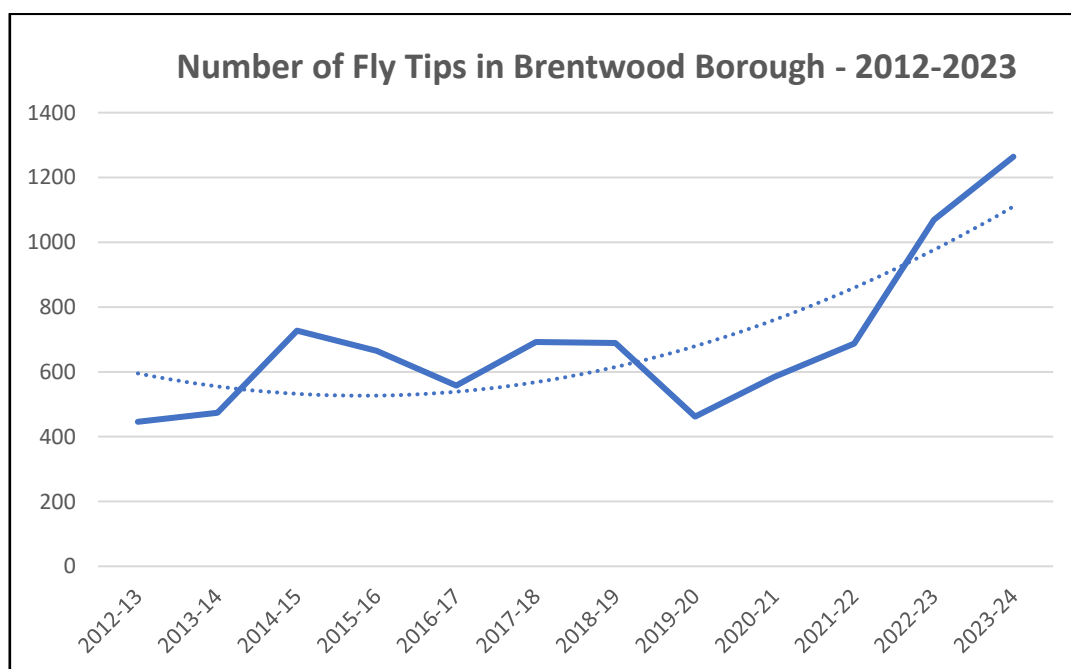
- 1.15 Essex state that the booking process is a cost-effective way to make optimum use of available capacity across the recycling network to support the needs of the current and growing population of Essex.
- 1.16 It has helped manage demand across the recycling centre network to reduce the queues and congestion that were being experienced at peak times and increase operational efficiency.
- 1.17 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
- 1.18 Customer satisfaction with the booking system, is high, with 93% of respondents to the most recent User Survey (summer 2023) reporting they were satisfied or better with the overall customer experience when using the

booking system and 93% of respondents satisfied or better with the ease of access, queuing and traffic control at recycling centres.

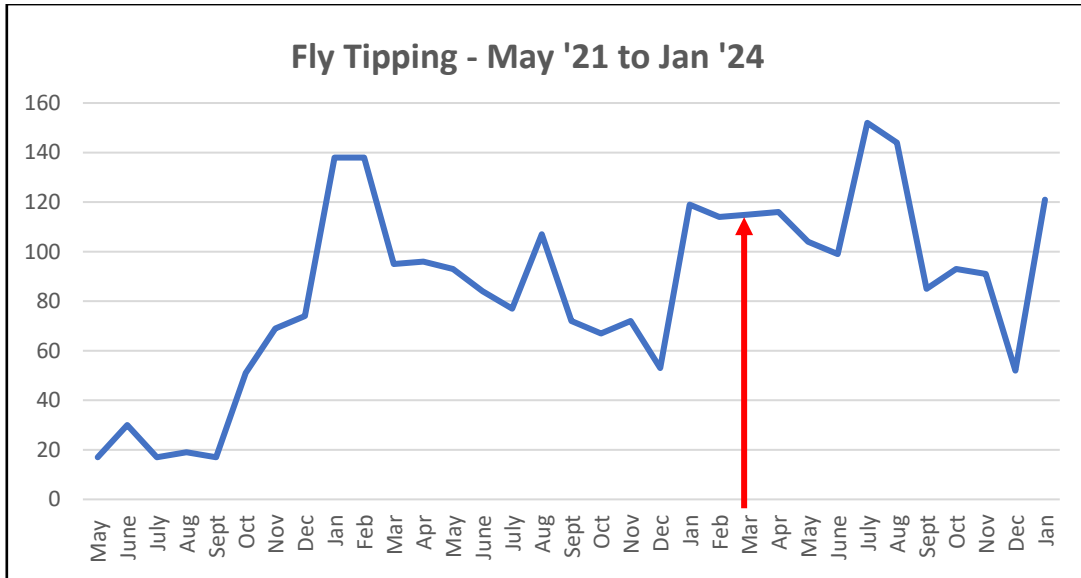
- 1.19 The results of the public consultation show a 58% net agreement with the proposal to retain county-wide for cars, compared to 39% in net disagreement. For vans, this rises to 72% net agreement, with net disagreement falling to 14%.
- 1.20 The Officer recommendation to adopt the booking system was approved by Cabinet at Essex County Council Cabinet Meeting – 27th February 2024. [Click Here](#).

Fly tipping in Brentwood Borough

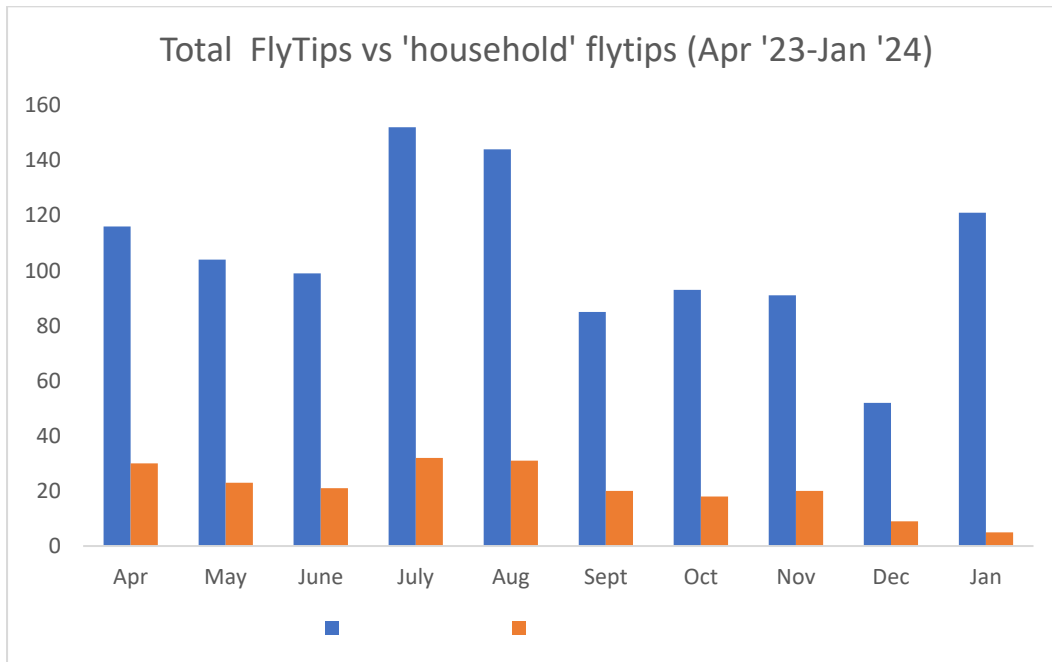
- 1.21 From 2012 to 2021 the number of fly-tips that the Borough experienced had remained fairly constant, with approximately 600 fly-tips per year. In the last two-years, the Borough has experienced a two-fold increase in the number of fly-tips. The resource allocated to fly tip clearance has remained the same through that period of time.



- 1.22 A more detailed monthly analysis of the last two and half years reveals a significant uprise in the fly tipping numbers approximately 15 months prior to the introduction of the pilot booking system at the recycling centres (represented by the red arrow).



“1.23 The size and approximate content of each fly tip collected in the borough has been recorded since April 2023. The graph below demonstrates fly-tips recorded each month, with a separate record for those fly-tips that would have been accepted into the recycling centre should the offender have wished to visit the recycling centre rather than illegally fly tip.



1.24 Two things can be observed, firstly the relatively low number of ‘household’ fly tips in any given month- that is fly tips that would have been accepted in the recycling centre. In comparison to the vast majority of fly tips consisting of larger loads and, or, containing waste that would be rejected at a recycling centre.

- 1.25 The second, perhaps tentative observation is that number of 'household' fly tips appears to be reducing, although the data set is too short-term to say this with any confidence. Unfortunately, this level of detail is not readily available for the period prior to the introduction of the pilot booking scheme.
- 1.26 In Conclusion, there does not appear to be a direct link between the numbers of fly tips that the Borough is experiencing, and the introduction of the booking system at the ECC Recycling Centres.

2.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Name & Title: Tim Willis, Director – Resources & Section 151 Officer
Tel & Email: 01277 312500 / tim.willis@brentwood.rochford.gov.uk

- 2.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the report.

3.0 LEGAL/GOVERNANCE IMPLICATIONS

Name & Title: Claire Mayhew, Joint Acting Director People & Governance & Monitoring Officer
Tel & Email 01277 312500 / claire.mayhew@brentwood.rochford.gov.uk

- 3.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the report.

4.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 4.1 There are no direct resource implications arising from the report.

5.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 5.1 There are no direct risks arising from the report.

6.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 6.1 Not applicable.

7.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

Name & Title: Kim Anderson, Corporate Manager - Communities, Leisure and Health

Tel & Email 01277 312500 kim.anderson@brentwood.gov.uk

- 7.1 There are no direct equality implications arising from the report.

8.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

Name & Title: Henry Muss, Climate & Sustainability Manager

Tel & Email 01277 312500 / henry.muss@brentwood.rochford.gov.uk

- 8.1 There are no direct environment and climate change implications arising from the report.

REPORT AUTHOR:

Name: Marcus Hotten

Title: Director of Environment

Phone: 01277 312500

Email: Marcus.hotten@brentwood.gov.uk