

21 January 2022

CHANGES TO SURREY'S COMMUNITY RECYCLING CENTRE POLICIES

Purpose of report: The report is intended to address three policy issues at the Community Recycling Centres (CRCs) now that they have returned to near normal operations after the removal of social distancing measures. Two of the proposed policy changes will contribute towards Enabling a Greener Future by either allowing more material to be recycled through our sites or by reducing the journey distances involved in residents transporting their waste

Introduction:

1. There is currently an anomaly in the CRC operating policy that allows a resident with a car to bring in chargeable construction or DIY waste to CRC sites but does not allow residents who have a permit for a van, pickup, or trailer to bring in the same waste.
2. Construction and DIY wastes are not considered household waste. Residents are allowed to bring certain construction and DIY waste into nine CRCs by car and dispose of it for a charge. The original rationale for not allowing vans, pickups, and trailers to be used was to reduce the risk of trade waste abuse through limiting capacity of vehicles permitted. Changing the policy to allow users of permitted vans, trailers, and pick-ups to bring chargeable construction and DIY waste to the nine CRCs that operate the chargeable waste scheme will make the policy simpler for residents and more consistent. Trade waste will still be banned from CRCs
3. Secondly, most waste disposal authorities that border Surrey have now introduced resident only policies at their CRC sites preventing Surrey residents from using them. To ensure that that Surrey County Council (SCC) are only paying for waste they have a legal duty to dispose of it is recommended that a Surrey resident only policy is also implemented at Surrey CRCs.
4. Finally, during the COVID pandemic residual waste containers were reintroduced at the four 'recycling only' Surrey CRCs as a means of reducing congestion at other CRCs caused by social distancing measures. Tonnages of residual waste across Surrey have not increased because of this measure,

therefore it is recommended that SCC retains these temporary arrangements mainly as a means of reducing car travel undertaken by residents who currently have to travel longer distances to CRC sites that do accept residual waste.

Policy Context

5. Surrey County Council are currently part way through the 'Rethinking Waste' transformation programme. The Rethinking Waste programme will set the future strategic direction for the waste disposal service through the waste disposal service re-procurement due September 2024. The programme seeks to move the county to a circular economy model, minimising the waste created and maximising the value of the waste that is created through an increase in the reuse and recycling of such waste, and to ultimately drive toward a more environmentally and financially sustainable model for managing waste and resources.
6. The Programme, working closely with district partners and the market, will also make recommendations to respond to some potentially significant changes arising from the emerging national Resources and Waste Strategy.
7. However, in advance of the re-procurement, and as a result of customer feedback, the impact of COVID and some external changes to policy made by neighbouring waste disposal authorities that has impacts for SCC, several changes to CRC operating policy are being recommended for earlier implementation. These changes will improve the CRC service for residents, whilst also promoting the objectives of the Rethinking Waste Programme. The table below provides further information on the fit with waste service strategic priorities

Policy change 1 – To allow holders of van and trailer permits to bring chargeable construction waste to the CRCs

8. The current SCC van permit policy prohibits any construction waste being brought into our CRCs in a van, pickup, or trailer. However, our chargeable waste scheme allows car drivers to bring in rubble, soil, plasterboard, and other inert material on payment of a charge. Customer feedback has highlighted that some customers find this policy restrictive and for ease would like to be able to also bring this material in by van, pickup, or trailer. It is therefore proposed to remove this restriction.
9. The existing charging scheme recovers the costs of receiving these materials at a CRC and infrastructure and staff are already in place making this change to allow vans, pickups, and trailers to bring chargeable construction waste to CRCs cost neutral for the council.

10. The restrictions on tradespersons would remain in force and anyone driving a van or pulling a trailer which is suspected of carrying trade waste would be prevented from entering using current measures and tests. This is because the CRC planning consents currently restricts use of the sites to householders and many sites do not have capacity to accept trade waste. Suez, SCC's waste contractor already provides a trade waste service at Epsom, Guildford, and Leatherhead waste transfer stations.

Policy Change 2 – Surrey resident-only CRCs

11. Currently five CRCs already have a 'Surrey residents only' policy in response to neighbouring councils who have adopted 'resident only' policies or have implemented booking systems that restrict entry to residents only. These include Hampshire, Berkshire, West Sussex, and Kent. Neighbouring London boroughs have also operated resident-only policies for some time.
12. A survey in 2017 identified that 13% of the users of Camberley and Farnham CRCs came from Hampshire or Berkshire therefore because of the policy we would expect the CRCs to become less busy and that we would have reduced costs and less material to deal with.
13. A Surrey Resident scheme already operates effectively at the Shepperton, Epsom, Warlingham, Caterham and Camberley CRCs. At these sites, proof of residency such as driving licence or utility bill is requested at a resident's first visit of the year to a CRC, at which point a windscreen sticker is provided as proof of residency for the remainder of that year. Site staff will allow a vehicle displaying the windscreen sticker entry to the site without having to do a repeat of the residency checks for subsequent visits, thereby reducing the queuing that might otherwise result to a minimum and reducing inconvenience for the resident. This existing resident scheme can be extended to all CRC sites across Surrey without any substantive additional staff or infrastructure costs.
14. It would be preferable for resident convenience and environmental reasons related to longer distances travelled by car for residents to be able to visit the CRC site nearest to their homes, irrespective of administrative boundaries. However, SCC officers have been unable to broker cost sharing mechanisms with neighbouring authorities to enable this, with the exception of West Sussex County Council who allow the continued use of their East Grinstead site for residents from the South East of Surrey in return for a payment to cover costs. In addition, we have an arrangement with Windsor & Maidenhead Council for their residents to use the Bagshot CRC for a charge and it is proposed that this remains in place.

15. Therefore, to ensure that SCC are only paying for waste for which it is legally obliged to dispose, it is recommended that the council adopt a similar resident-only approach at all CRC sites.

Policy Change 3 – Residual waste disposal facilities at ‘Recycling- Only’ CRCs

16. Residual waste facilities were removed at Bagshot, Cranleigh, Warlingham and Dorking CRCs in May 2019 following a Cabinet decision in January 2019. In March 2021, Cabinet agreed to reintroduce residual waste facilities for a period of up to 12 months to alleviate traffic congestion at other sites during the COVID response resulting from social distancing measures.
17. It should be noted that the reintroduction of residual waste facilities at these four sites has not led to an increase in the overall amount of residual waste generated from the CRC service. Appendix 1 gives more detail. The four sites between them, handle just 6% of the total amount of waste and recycling collected at our CRCs and therefore any change, if detectable, is likely to be minimal.
18. Social distancing measures have now ceased and therefore a decision needs to be made about the temporary residual waste facilities at the ‘recycling only’ sites.
19. The permanent reintroduction of residual waste containers will increase the offering at these CRCs without additional costs. Evidence suggests that when the recycling-only sites were introduced, the sites became less frequented, whilst other sites that accepted residual waste became busier. Offering a residual waste facility at all sites will reduce customer journey distances and increase efficiency of operation leading to an increase in customer satisfaction.
20. There is also the potential to reduce distances travelled by car to CRCs by residents of Dorking, Cranleigh, Warlingham and Bagshot. These are all significant population centres and Cranleigh is about to have an additional 1,800 households built at Dunsfold creating additional need.
21. In addition, the opportunity to introduce black bag sorting at these four additional sites as well as the other eleven CRCs. Black bag sorting is a valuable method employed to increase recycling and reduce residual waste by removing by hand obvious recyclables from the black bag.
22. Therefore, on balance of the evidence, it is recommended that there is a permanent reintroduction of residual waste containers at these four sites.

23. Returning residual waste arrangements at the four sites will help to reduce journey distances for residents in these areas.
24. It is therefore recommended that the containers for residual waste at Dorking, Warlingham, Bagshot and Cranleigh CRCs are restored on a permanent basis.

Conclusions:

25. The Select Committee's views are sought on the three proposed policy changes, summarised below
 1. To allow users of pickups and trailers, or vans registered with our permit scheme, to bring and pay for chargeable construction wastes at the nine CRCs that currently accept chargeable wastes.
 2. That all Surrey CRCs shall be for the use of Surrey residents only and that proof of residency will be required to gain entry to the CRCs.
 3. That the temporary measure of allowing residual waste to be accepted at the four 'Recycling Only' CRCs during the Coronavirus social distancing restrictions be made permanent going forward.

Recommendations:

26. That the Select Committee endorse the proposed changes to the policies which are to be considered by Cabinet on 29 January 2022.

Next steps:

27. Subject to agreement of Cabinet the changes will be made as set out as follows:
 1. The change to the van permit policy to allow chargeable construction waste to be brought in vans and trailers will be publicised and implemented by 31 March 2022
 2. The resident-only policy will be publicised and implemented across all CRCs by 31 March 2022
 3. The CRCs at Bagshot, Warlingham, Cranleigh and Dorking will continue to accept residual waste on a permanent basis

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Annexes

Annex 1 - Trends in residual waste tonnages at CRCS

Sources/background papers

Cabinet Agenda and Minutes 29 January 2019

Cabinet Agenda and Minutes 30 March 2021