

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

**RECORD OF DECISION OF
THE CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT**

Decision Made: 09 September 2011

**DOG WASTE BIN PROVISION AND ALTERNATIVE BUDGET
STRATEGY COST SAVING OPTIONS**

Issue for Decision

To consider alternative proposals to removing dog waste bins which had previously been identified in the budget strategy as a saving in 2011/2012.

Decision Made

1. That the provision of dog bins throughout the Borough be continued.
2. That alternative cost saving options, as set out below, to achieve budget strategy savings of £33,000, originally identified for 2011/12, be agreed.

Option	Savings Achievable 2011/12
Deletion of 0.5 post in Environmental Enforcement	£13,030
Rationalise Out of Hours Cover Arrangements	£4,000
Additional Savings from recently deleted posts	£10,890
Savings from the parking partnership	£5,080
Total	£33,000

3. That the existing contractor be retained to empty and maintain dog waste bins for one year until 30th July 2012.
4. That the existing provision of dog waste bins is not increased and officers base any decision to replace damaged bins on the criteria of suitability of location, proximity to alternative dog waste bins or standard litter bins and likely usage be agreed.

Reasons for Decision

Appraisal of Original Option to Remove Dog Bins

Maidstone Borough Council's Budget Strategy for 2011/12 identifies savings within the Environment portfolio of £33,000 in relation to the removal of dog bins.

In preparing for the changes, it has become clear through feedback from residents and parishes that the removal of the dog waste bins would be unpopular, require a significant change in dog walking habits and poses a risk of increasing incidents of dog fouling or littering of bagged dog waste. I received a number of representations.

I have discussed this information informally with officers. In light of this and more detailed analysis of the original option, officers were requested to find alternative savings to meet the budget strategy. These are now presented below and will achieve the savings required with more certainty and without having the same impact on services offered by Maidstone Borough Council.

Alternative Cost Saving Options

The savings required could be achieved with the following changes, further details are provided below the table:

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A budget for half a full-time equivalent post exists within the Environmental Enforcement section. This post originally existed to fund a Civic Warden's position although was not filled through 2010/11. The capacity of the Environmental Enforcement section to enforce against environmental crimes has been expanded significantly through the trial and recently the subsequent contract procurement of self funded officers through private contractor, Xfor. This has proven to be a cost effective way of enforcing against environmental crimes and as such, this half post could be deleted with minimal impact on service delivery.

The Council currently offers a service to deal with urgent matters arising outside of normal office hours. This service currently comprises of two

teams, one dealing predominantly with environmental health related matters and another which deals with more general matters. With appropriate revisions to procedures and training for officers, this service could be rationalised into a single team which could generate the savings indicated above. The service would aim to deal only with situations which genuinely require an urgent response which would result in a more cost effective delivery of essential cover.

Action already taken during the financial year 2011/12 to delete the post of Technical Facilities Manager has achieved actual savings in excess of those previously published in budget strategy for 2011/12. This will deliver an additional £10,890 in 2011/12.

The remaining £5,080 will be achieved this year as a part of a parking partnership between Maidstone and Swale.

Extension of the Existing Contract

In 2008, following a tender exercise in compliance with the European Procurement Regulations, a contract to service and maintain dog waste bins was awarded to RIP Cleaning Services. The service contract was awarded for three years with two opportunities to extend the contract by a further year in 2011 and again 2012.

Due to the review into the provision of dog bins and the potential to remove bins, RIP Cleansing Services were issued with notification of termination of contract; however, whilst the review has been ongoing, RIP have continued to operate under the existing contract terms. The option remains to extend the contract for twelve months to ensure continuity of service if the decision outlined above is taken to retain the dog bins.

This contract has operated very well through the contract period and is considered to represent value for money to the Council both in terms of cost and performance.

The option to extend the existing contract is subject to renegotiation of existing charges. Efforts will be made to reduce the cost of the contract and offset any additional costs.

Current provision of dog bins

Maidstone Borough Council will continue to empty and maintain dog bins provided in the Borough. A number of the bins are in need of repair or replacement although there is no capital funding. Officers will seek to find a cost effective approach to maintaining or replacing bins wherever possible.

The Council frequently gets requests for new bins, from both the public and Elected Members, to address issues with localised fouling hotspots. In 2008 it was agreed that the current bin provision be frozen. Research has shown that whilst the provision of bins allows responsible dog owners to dispose of their dog's waste, the provision of dog bins alone does not encourage irresponsible owners to pick up after their dog.

Since 2008, a change in classification means that bagged dog waste can be treated as litter for disposal and therefore no longer treated as special waste. In May 2010 the Council launched its 'Foul Play' campaign which aims to reduce fouling and promote responsible dog ownership. A key aspect of 'Foul Play' was to promote the use of litter bins and domestic waste bins alongside the specialist dog bins.

The Council provides in excess of 1300 litter bins which are all suitable for the disposal of bagged dog waste. Extending this message assists in encouraging responsible dog ownership by offering more opportunities for dog owners to dispose of dog waste responsibly.

Analysis has been undertaken into the current bin provision, which has included generating maps which identify locations of both dog waste and litter bins. Initial findings from this analysis suggest that there is scope for the current bin provision to be reviewed to ensure that bins are well distributed and suitably placed. It is recommended that this programme is continued to ensure that bins of all types are positioned effectively and in a way which makes best use of the Council's resources.

Alternatives considered and why rejected

The previous decision to remove dog waste bins could be implemented, but, as detailed above, this has led to some public dissatisfaction. In addition to this, it would not be well received by a large number of residents and may lead to a greater frequency of incidents of dog fouling or littering of bagged dog waste.

The contract to empty and service these dog bins could be re-tendered rather than extended. This has not been offered as an option since the tender exercise conducted in 2008 demonstrated that the current contractor's offer is competitive. Also, in order to ensure that dog bins continue to be serviced regularly, re-tendering this contract at this stage would pose a risk to the Council by not having an ongoing collection arrangement in place whilst a procurement exercise is undertaken to seek an alternative.

Background Papers

Budget Strategy – Corporate Revenue and Capital Budget 2011/12
Onwards

Should you be concerned about this decision and wish to call it in, please submit a call in form signed by any two Non-Executive Members to the Head of Change and Scrutiny by: **16 September 2011**