

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

RECORD OF DECISION OF CABINET

Decision Made: 24 January 2024

Provision of Wheeled Bins

Issue for Decision

In April 2023, the Council changed its policy for the replacement of wheeled bins. The report reviews the impact of this and the subsequent amendments to the policy.

The report presents the new policy for the provision of wheeled bins for approval.

Decision Made

1. That the lessons learnt from the policy change be noted.
2. That the new revised policy for the provision of replacement bins be approved.

Reasons for Decision

In 1999, Maidstone Borough Council introduced wheeled bins for the collection of residents' rubbish. Wheeled bins for recycling were then introduced in 2008 and food waste bins in 2011. The current annual replacement rate is approximately 12%, significantly higher than the 3% estimated within the contract. However, given wheeled bins have a life expectancy of 10+ years, the current replacement rate is not unrealistic.

Over the past 4 years, this has cost the Council, on average, £300k per year.

Several years ago, charges were introduced for the provision of bins to new build properties or for new occupiers of properties whereby the previous owner or tenant had removed the bins. For the latter of these, the provision of bins is standardly included in the property's fixture and fitting list, enabling residents to ensure that the bins are left at the property.

In 2022/23, this contributed £58k towards the cost of providing wheeled bins. Therefore, there remained a significant cost of over £220k per year to the Council of providing replacement bins.

Charging for all replacement bins was proposed as a savings option as part of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy. This was approved by the Council in February 2023 and implemented in April 2023.

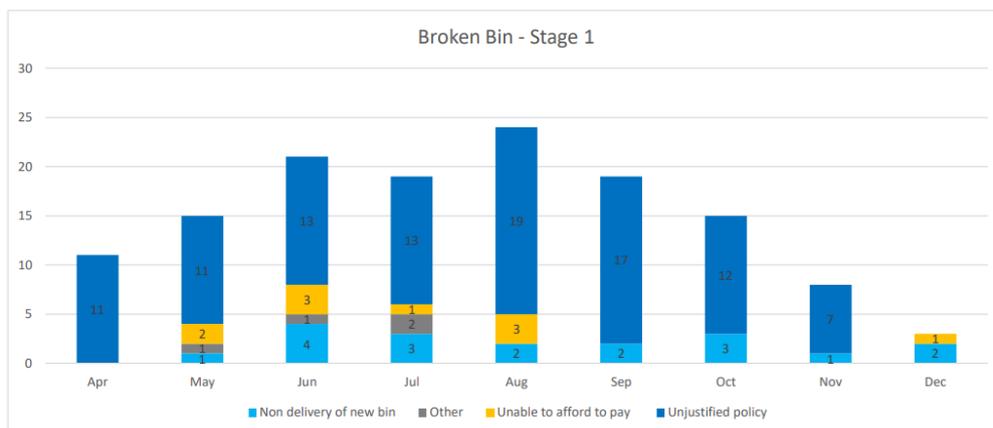
This policy was in place for 24 weeks and during that time there was a 40% decrease in requests for replacement bins compared with the previous year. For the bins eligible for payment, 78% were paid and the remaining were provided free of charge. During this time, 106 complaints were received about the charges which equates to 7% of the bin replacement requests.

Following review of the data, feedback from customer services and consideration of the complaints received, the policy was updated to remove the charge for the replacement of bins which were reported as unserviceable by the collection crews. This was implemented from 25 September 2023 and is included in Appendix 1 of the report.

Over the past 11 weeks, there have been 584 requests for replacement refuse or recycling bins. This suggests a 12% reduction in requests for replacement refuse and recycling bins since the revised policy was introduced in September 2023. However, the majority (83%) of bins provided were free of charge.

The payment rate for the replacement of missing bins remains at 76%.

The graph below shows the complaints data relating to the charging for replacement bins. The number of complaints peaked in August and have shown steady decline since and now in line with levels before the policy was first introduced.



An overall comparison on bin orders shows a 17% projected decrease in requests compared with 2022/23, which equates to an estimated £50,000 saving.

Overall, the withdrawal of the charges for replacement broken bins is likely to create a £100k budget pressure in 2024/25. This has been captured in the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

Lessons Learnt

The original charging policy was introduced to help tackle budget pressures and generate a saving to support the Council’s Medium-Term Financial Strategy. Research had shown that the policy had been successfully implemented in neighbouring boroughs and in many locations across the UK.

However, it may be assumed that the age of Maidstone’s bin stock, originally introduced in 1999, is the likely reason for the high replacement rate and therefore the charges had a bigger impact on residents.

Over the 24 years since Maidstone first introduced wheeled bins, there have been over 8 different bin suppliers which restricts the ability to carry out repairs i.e.

the replacement of lids. The use of different manufacturers is largely outside of the Council's control, with the original supplier no longer in business and fluctuating demand significantly impacting lead-times. However, every effort should be made to limit future suppliers to enable replacement parts to be held in stock.

The impact of the charges is likely to have been felt more acutely due to the current financial pressures on householders and therefore greater consideration should have been given when the policy was being developed to how those facing poverty could be supported. Options for second-hand bins and subsidised rates were introduced in September, however this should have been considered earlier.

The revised policy, requiring the bin to be unserviceable before being replaced has continued to reduce the level of bin requests suggesting a reduction in the unnecessary replacement of bins with superficial damage or that are dirty.

CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

There has been significant discussion regarding the charging for replacement wheeled bins at Housing, Health and Environment Policy Advisory Committee and Council. The changes to the policy in September 2023 were supported, however a full review of the data was requested and for lessons learnt to be presented to the Housing, Health and Environment PAC.

The Housing, Health and Environment Committee considered the matter report at its 16 January 2024 meeting and were supportive of the recommendations.

In considering the item it was noted that resident's having easier access to new bins had a positive impact on biodiversity and climate change.

Alternatives considered and why rejected

1. Retain the Bin Charging Policy issued in September 2023 (Appendix 1 of the report).
2. Carry out a further review of the charges for the provision of wheeled bins and reconsider the application of charges for damaged bins.

These were not selected as the age of the bin stock was the most likely reason for the high replacement rate and therefore the charges had a bigger impact on residents during a time of high financial pressure.

Background Papers

None.

I have read and approved the above decision for the reasons (including possible alternative options rejected) as set out above.



Signed: _____
Leader of the Council, Councillor David Burton

Full details of both the report for the decision taken above and any consideration by the relevant Policy Advisory Committee can be found at the following area of the [website](#)

Call-In: Should you be concerned about this decision and wish to call it in, please submit a call-in form signed by any three Members to the Proper Officer by: **5pm on 2 February 2024**