

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL
RECORD OF DECISION OF THE CABINET

Decision Made: 15 September 2010

WASTE AND RECYCLING STRATEGY 2010-2015

Issue for Decision

To consider the options available to the Council for the improvement to waste and recycling services in order to meet waste reduction and recycling targets and increase the cost efficiency of the services.

Decision Made

1. That the Waste and Recycling Strategy 2010-2015, as attached at Appendix A to the Report of the Assistant Director for Environment and Regulatory Services be adopted.
2. That, subject to confirmation of the enabling funding being provided, the implementation of borough-wide weekly food waste collection alongside fortnightly residual waste and recycling collections as detailed in Appendix B to the Report of the Assistant Director for Environment and Regulatory Services be agreed.
3. That the Policy and Procedure Statement for the new service as included in Appendix C to the Report of the Assistant Director for Environment and Regulatory Services be agreed.
4. That additional changes to the waste and recycling service be considered to identify potential savings in line with the 2011/12 Budget Strategy;

Reasons for Decision

The Best Value Review carried out in December 2009 recommended that the Council prepare and adopt a Waste and Recycling Strategy that was based on the waste hierarchy. The aim of this is to ensure that the most cost effective and environmentally friendly options for both residents and the Council are prioritised that meet the recycling targets that have been set by government and EU legislation.

The Waste and Recycling Strategy (attached at Appendix A to the report of the Assistant Director for Environment and Regulatory Services), identifies the vision and sets out the Council's objectives for the next 5 years, including increasing the amount of household waste recycled or composted to 50% by 2015 (slightly above the national target of 45%) and reducing total household waste arisings by 10% by 2015 (compared

with 2005-10 average). The implementation of borough-wide weekly food waste collections alongside fortnightly residual waste collections is projected to achieve a recycling rate of 45%. Measures to increase participation in the mixed dry recycling service and additional recycling through the local recycling sites should increase the recycling rate further to 50% by 2015.

There is still a need in the present financial climate to be realistic about what can be achieved within existing resources. Therefore the objective to meet any additional costs of operating the service through efficiency improvements has been included within this strategy. However, in order to deliver the new service, start up costs and some limited ongoing financial support will be needed. WRAP has agreed to significantly increase its capital support and additional funding is being sought from the Kent Waste Partnership.

This Strategy supports the objectives of the Kent Waste Strategy, the 'Vision for Kent' Kent's Community Strategy, the Sustainable Community Strategy for the borough of Maidstone as well as the Council's medium term plans (Strategic Plan 2009-12 and Medium Term Financial Plan).

Following the principles of the waste hierarchy, waste prevention and minimisation offer the Council the most significant benefits, both environmentally and financially. The production of less waste reduces the need for transportation as well as the requirements for treatment or disposal. This improves the efficiency of the service, reduces contract costs and contributes to the Council's carbon reduction target.

The Strategy does not neglect the importance of reuse and recycling. These remain key priorities for the Council especially with regard to reuse opportunities for the bulky collection service, offering weekly food waste collections and increasing recycling through local recycling sites.

On the wider agenda, the strategy reflects European and National objectives with regard to waste and recycling and recognises that the Secretary for State for the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) has launched a review of waste policies. This follows the announcement of the government's ambition for a "zero waste economy" and the purpose for the review is to look at waste policy and waste management in England to ensure that it supports the deliverability of this ambition. Maidstone's waste and recycling strategy supports the overall aims of a zero waste economy, through the prioritisation of waste reduction measures and focus on waste prevention wherever possible. The review is currently calling for evidence from local authorities, individuals and organisations. The Council will be replying within the timetable for response.

Options Appraisal

As part of the Best Value Review and subsequent development of the waste and recycling strategy, four options have been identified. These are:

- (i) Retain existing service

- (ii) Implement fortnightly residual waste collections whilst retaining existing recycling services
- (iii) Implement borough-wide weekly food waste collections alongside fortnightly residual waste collections and the existing recycling services
- (iv) Introduce a weekly food waste and fortnightly residual waste trial to 7000 households

The full appraisal of these options is included at Appendix D to the report of the Assistant Director for Environment and Regulatory Services.

Option two, the implementation of fortnightly residual waste collections whilst retaining existing recycling services represents the best option financially for the council, offering significant savings and reducing the cost per household of the service.

However, only option three would enable the Council to reach the national recycling target of 45% by 2015. It is expected that increases in participation in the recycling collection and additional services offered through the bring sites would ensure the Council reaches a recycling rate of 50% for little additional cost.

At present there is a significant opportunity to obtain investment that will meet the costs of the implementation and operation of the new service.

Following informal discussions with the Cabinet Member and Shadow Cabinet Member for the Environment, implementation of borough-wide food waste collections alongside fortnightly residual waste collections offers a publicly acceptable option for maximising recycling and managing Maidstone's waste. However it is accepted that this option does not provide the Council with any savings and therefore in the current financial climate it is important that service costs are reviewed as part of the Best Value Review action plan and the current collection arrangements are challenged.

Also as part of the Best Value Review, the implementation plan was considered by the Environment and Transportation Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the comments made were reflected in the final plan. This included discussions regarding fortnightly residual waste collections and the provision of a weekly food waste collection.

The strategy recognises the benefits of alternate week collections, through reducing waste arisings and significantly increasing recycling, but reflects that this alone would not meet recycling targets and therefore proposes a combination of weekly food and alternate week collections of residual waste and recycling. This will raise recycling levels to 45% by 2015 and when combined with efforts to improve participation rates and improved "bring" collection systems will aim to reach 50% recycling by 2015. The continued weekly collection of food waste provides a continued high quality collection system which the public will be able to support.

Households would be provided with a 5 litre kitchen caddy, initial supply of compostable liners and a 23 litre external caddy for the collection of cooked and uncooked food.

The collections would be made weekly by a small specialist vehicle and the waste will be taken to a local in-vessel compost facility.

Special consideration will need to be given to those households who currently have a sack collection as it is likely that they would have to remain on a weekly refuse collection. Some properties with communal refuse collections will also retain their current collection frequency as it will not be feasible to provide sufficient bins due to storage limitations. The Policy and Procedure Statement (attached at Appendix B to the report of the Assistant Director for Environment and Regulatory Services) has been prepared to take into account the implementation of weekly food waste collections and fortnightly refuse collections. It includes criteria for the provision of larger refuse bins as well as the policy regarding those remaining on weekly refuse collections. This also includes additional help for those experiencing difficulties reducing their waste or with the food waste collections. Information regarding the problems experienced will be gathered from residents in order to identify specific solutions which will meet their needs.

The proposed implementation plan for the introduction of this service is included at Appendix C to the report of the Assistant Director for Environment and Regulatory Services.

The strategy also considers other ways to increase recycling operations through improvement to bring sites including specific targets for glass.

The implementation of the mixed dry recycling collections has been very successful with participation rates in excess of 80% in some areas. However the monthly performance data shows that the tonnage collected appears to be reaching a plateau. Therefore new methods of engagement along with service improvements will be needed to improve the Council's performance.

The Waste and Recycling Strategy also proposes to maintain the comprehensive communications and education campaign which currently promotes the "Love Food Hate Waste" campaign, home composting and other waste prevention messages. Use of Mosaic will help identify and target key messages to individuals and the local press will be actively engaged to ensure that the true benefits of the new scheme are realised.

For the majority of households the recycling week would remain unchanged and the alternate week would become the refuse collection week. This means that half of the borough will have their refuse collection one week and the other half will have their refuse collection on the following week. This will limit the disruption to the existing recycling service.

Financial Implications

There are significant set up costs for the new service in order to provide caddies and bins. These are estimated at £355,000. It is anticipated that this will be funded through grants from WRAP and from Kent Waste Partnership.

The estimated costs of operating the new service will be close to cost neutral although some limited ongoing funding may be required from the Kent Waste Partnership. Discussions are ongoing with officers from both organisations. Final costs and funding arrangements will be concluded in the next few weeks. This will mean that the Council will need to identify alternative savings in order to meet the agreed Budget Strategy Savings for 2011/12.

The introduction of a food waste service is not the most cost effective option for the council and the cost per household of the service would remain high. As part of the Best Value Review, efficiency savings have already been implemented and further options identified. It is important that the costs of the core service be reviewed in the context of the Best Value Review to see if further savings can be found.

Maximisation of recyclate income has also been identified as part of the waste strategy and therefore ongoing discussions will be held with Kent County Council in order to identify any opportunities to increase the income generated from waste recycling in Maidstone.

Communications and Engagement

The Communications Strategy will include the provision of information through direct mail and face-to-face activities such as roadshows and public meetings. One-to-one advice would also be available to address individuals' concerns about reducing their waste.

Engagement work should start immediately and will continue past the start of the scheme. This would be followed with specific information immediately prior to the implementation of the service change in January 2011.

The current recycling calendar expires in October 2010 and therefore a new calendar will be issued to identify recycling and refuse collection weeks. A supporting leaflet will be supplied with the calendar to provide residents with all necessary information, promote recycling and reuse and provide contact information.

Participation monitoring of the recycling service would also be carried out prior to the introduction of fortnightly collections and then again following the implementation of the service change. This would be used to focus resources on areas where recycling participation remains low or contamination issues are high.

Alternatives considered and why rejected

The Council could decide not to adopt a Waste and Recycling Strategy and focus on maintaining existing services. This approach has been adopted in the past and has resulted in inefficient services which do not provide value for money. It could also result in uninformed decisions being taken in the future which do not support the overall objectives of the Council, Kent Waste Strategy and Sustainable Community Strategies for both the county of Kent and the Maidstone borough.

Alternatively, the Waste and Recycling Strategy could prioritise recycling rather than waste prevention and minimisation. This is likely to be the most expensive option, with the requirement for considerable investment to provide additional services and increase the amount of waste sent for recycling. The food waste collections without fortnightly refuse collections would incur an additional revenue cost of approximately £650,000.

As above the Council could retain weekly refuse collections however this would result in food waste collections being financially unviable. Weekly refuse collections do not promote waste reduction and recycling so the council's performance in these areas would be unlikely to improve resulting in failure to meet the Council's targets.

It would be possible to adopt a strategy which provided the most cost effective solution, i.e. fortnightly residual waste collections and ignore government recycling targets which are not mandatory. However the inward investment provides an opportunity to increase the quality of the service and recycling rate at limited cost.

It was not recommended that the Council change the fleet to introduce split-bodied vehicles for the co-collection of refuse and recycling on the same week as this would incur considerable contract costs, including additional relocation costs for the existing vehicles. This could be considered for the new waste collection contract in 2013 and could significantly reduce operational costs.

The Council could decide to move to alternate weekly collections only. However such arrangements would not meet the recycling targets set by government.

Background Papers

Cabinet Report for Best Value Review of Waste and Recycling – Options Appraisal – 11 November 2009
Defra waste review document August 2010.

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: 24 September 2010
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