

Waste Strategy 2014-2019



Introduction

Over the past 5 years, Maidstone Borough Council has demonstrated its commitment to deliver cost effective and sustainable waste and recycling services. This has included the introduction of comprehensive recycling collections, notably a weekly food waste service and a fully co-mingled collection of paper, cardboard, cans, glass and plastic packaging.

In 2010, the Council adopted its first five-year Waste Strategy to outline the key principles for waste management in Maidstone and set ambitious targets for reducing waste and increasing recycling. By following the principles of the waste hierarchy, the Council achieved the objectives set out in this strategy in 2013/14.

In August 2013, Maidstone Borough Council joined with Ashford and Swale Borough Councils and Kent County Council to deliver the Mid Kent Joint Waste Partnership. Waste collection and some elements of street cleansing are now operated by Biffa Municipal Limited across the three boroughs. The new collection contract has delivered significant savings for the Council, in excess of £1 million per year, whilst improving services for local residents.

As part of the Mid Kent Joint Waste Partnership, Maidstone Borough Council will benefit from shared disposal savings generated from reductions in waste arisings and through increased recycling.

This new strategy looks to build upon the successful service improvements introduced over the past few years and set new objectives for the next five years.

As part of the Kent Resource Partnership, Maidstone Borough Council continues to support the Kent Waste Strategy which was refreshed in 2012/13.

This focuses on three key policy areas: Materials Security and Resource Efficiency; Value for Money for Kent Taxpayers; and Supporting Kent's Interests

These are reflected in Maidstone's vision and the objectives set out in this strategy.

Nationally, the government carried out a review of waste policies in England in 2010 and has recently issued guidance regarding waste collections. Following this the government set out their principle commitments which included managing waste in line with the waste hierarchy, supporting incentives, improving the quality of collections and making it easier for people to recycle. This strategy supports these commitments and the government's ambition for a zero waste economy.

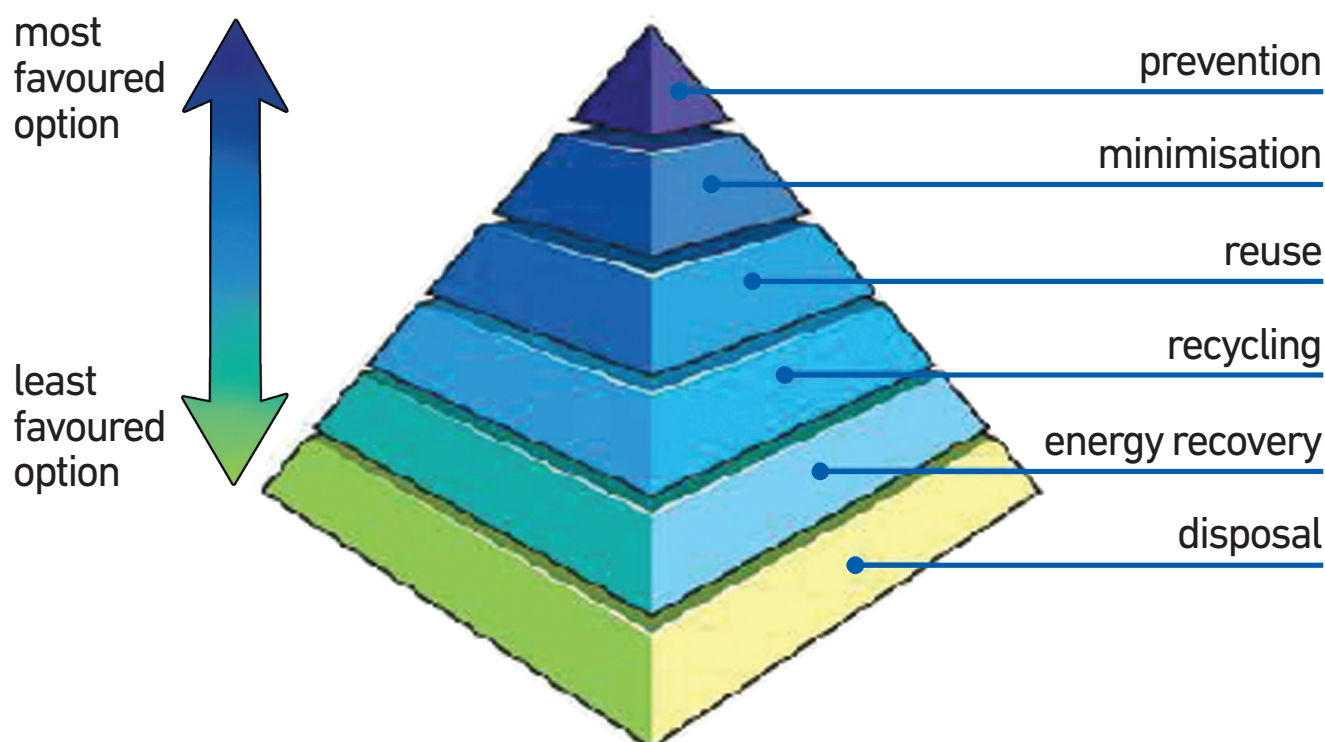


The revised EU Waste Framework Directive has also now been adopted into UK legislation and the key focus is on the quality of recycle as well as the application of the waste hierarchy into UK legislation. The EU Directive requires the separate collection of paper, metal, plastic and glass by 2015 and there is currently national debate regarding the acceptable quality of these recyclables through co-mingled collections. Separate collections are required where they are “technically, environmentally and economically practicable” (TEEP) otherwise co-mingled collections will be allowed. The Council is committed to ensuring the recycling services meet the requirements and that quality recycling is collected.

This strategy supports the revised directive, the recycling targets set and the collection of high quality recyclables.

This is the second Waste Strategy that the Council has produced and will sit alongside the Council’s medium term plans (Strategic Plan and Medium Term Financial Plan).

Whilst the Council launched a commercial waste service in 2013/14, this will not be included as part of this Strategy. Commercial waste is required by law to be measured separately to household waste and therefore will be excluded from the Waste Strategy..



Our Vision

Overall the Council wants Maidstone Borough to be a great place to live and one that provides value for money for local taxpayers. For waste services this is to provide an excellent service which will reduce waste, ensure sustainable and cost effective recycling collections and enable Maidstone residents to achieve high levels of participation.

Objectives – what are we going to do?

In order to achieve the vision for the future of the service, the following objectives are proposed:

1. To maintain low levels of total household waste and recycling at the level achieved in 2011/12 of 813kg per household
2. To increase the amount of household waste sent for recycling, reuse or composting to 60% by 2019
3. To achieve zero waste to landfill by 2015/16
4. To maintain the value for money of the waste collection service and achieve a cost per household below £40 per year
5. To improve residents' satisfaction with Maidstone Borough Council's waste and recycling services
6. To support the Council's objective of 3% annual carbon reduction by 2015 and to continue to contribute to the Council's Carbon Management Plan in order to meet the targets set out in the Kent Environment Strategy.

How are we going to do it?

In order to achieve the objectives and ultimately the vision for Maidstone's waste and recycling services, there needs to be a combination of innovative service improvements and targeted promotion. Priority will be given to development options which best support the objectives and principles of the waste hierarchy, starting with waste prevention as the most favourable option.

1. Waste Prevention

Waste prevention primarily focuses on the avoidance of waste from manufacturers and retailers; however it is important that residents are aware of ways they can also help. This will remain a key message throughout the educational campaigns, with advice about avoiding products with excessive packaging and using their consumer power to force manufacturers to improve their sustainability.

The Council also supports the Kent Resource Partnership's "Fresher for Longer" campaign with Marks and Spencer which aims to prevent the unnecessary waste of food. Information will be provided to residents at promotional events and on the Council's website..

2. Waste Minimisation

This is a key priority for the Council and it is important that local residents understand the

benefits of reducing the amount of waste they throw away. All options which support this priority will be considered by the Council.

Following the introduction of comprehensive recycling collections and fortnightly refuse collections, the total amount of waste produced by residents in the borough reduced by 11%. This was an incredible achievement and was the result of residents having a better understanding of what they threw away, especially in relation to food waste.

It is essential that residents understand what happens to the waste they throw away. Therefore the Council will carry out an engagement campaign to identify the potential barriers to recycling as well as possible incentives to promote waste reduction.

The majority of methods to encourage waste minimisation are through education and increasing public awareness, including the use of the Love Food Hate Waste campaign. The Council recently carried out a large recycling event in Jubilee Square which incorporated a Love Food Hate Waste roadshow with cooking demonstrations. This gained a large amount of publicity and was well supported by local residents. Waste minimisation initiatives such as this will continue along with school workshops and community events.

The Council also continues to promote home composting as this offers two major benefits; the composting of garden waste and vegetable peelings produces nutritious plant food whilst also reducing the amount of waste which needs to be collected for disposal or treatment. Although the recycling of garden waste through the kerbside collection or the Household Waste Recycling Centre is preferable to disposing of it in landfill or burning it, reducing



the amount of garden waste collected significantly reduces the transportation and energy requirements, providing environmental and financial benefits. The Council currently promotes subsidised home compost bins in order to encourage residents to use this option for waste reduction over the alternatives. The scheme has continued to be popular over the past few years and will be monitored throughout 2014/15 to identify ways to increase uptake year on year.

3. Reuse

The reuse of items, such as furniture, is a very effective way of reducing the amount of waste sent for disposal.

Alongside the fortnightly rubbish collection, the Council operates a bulky waste collection and Saturday freighter service which enable residents to dispose of unwanted household items. Unfortunately neither of these services currently supports the Council's objectives as the waste is sent to landfill, the least favourable option of the waste hierarchy.

In order to reduce unnecessary waste, it is important that these services are reviewed and more sustainable options are identified. Many items collected through these services have the potential for being reused or recycled, whilst for other items there are already better disposal options available.

The existing bulky collection and Saturday freighter services do not allow items to be reused or recycled easily. The waste is currently mixed together and in the case of the Saturday freighter, it is crushed by the vehicle. Discussions have already taken place with private and voluntary sector organisations regarding the reuse of furniture and electrical items, however the current arrangements limit the opportunities.

The Council will combine these services into a single service which aims to separate reusable items either by signposting residents to a voluntary sector organisation or through separate collections for reusable items.

Another key area for improvement is the reuse of textiles. The Council launched a kerbside collection of textiles in August 2013; however uptake has been fairly low. Promotion of this service is essential to improve participation; however this will be carried out alongside the existing promotion of charity shops and textile banks within the borough.

Smaller scale reuse also plays a fundamental role in the educational activities, with workshops and school assemblies showing children how to reuse everyday items into fun creativity. These remain an essential part of the Council's comprehensive educational campaign along with fostering children's imaginations through challenges and competitions.

4. Recycling

Following the expansion of recycling services in 2013, Maidstone's recycling rate increased from 45% to nearly 50%, however it is important that the Council maintains this performance and looks to build upon this success in the future. Despite the improvements, participation levels have declined over the past 2 years. It is essential that the Council focuses on re-engaging local residents and communities and promote the huge benefits of recycling more.

Recent informational visits to local authorities with similar recycling services have shown that a recycling rate of 60% is ambitious but achievable.

The Council intends to achieve a recycling rate of 60% by 2019 through the implementation of the following improvements to the existing recycling service:

Recycling for Residents living in Flats

There are over 7,000 flats in Maidstone, many of which have weekly collections of rubbish. Recycling bins have been provided for many of these, however there is little incentive for residents to use them and they regularly become contaminated with general rubbish.

It is essential that residents living within flats are encouraged to recycle and options which make recycling easier will be explored. A key step will be to bring collections in line with those provided to individual houses and apply a single policy across all housing stock. This will include limiting the amount of rubbish collected.

Communal food waste bins will also be provided to flats along with kitchen caddies to help



residents separate food waste in their kitchen.

Extra recycling bins will also be provided where needed and the Council will work with managing agents and landlords to encourage residents to separate their recycling correctly. Direct engagement with residents through face to face activity as well as providing welcome packs and posters will be used. Where possible, recycling points will be designed with the support of managing agents and landlords in order to improve accessibility and visual appearance.

Street Litter Recycling

Although Maidstone has previously trialled on-street recycling bins unsuccessfully, there is still a significant opportunity to recycle more from the litter collected from our streets.

Many other authorities have introduced on-street recycling bins which are clearly visible and can be differentiated from other litter bins. These have been very successful and therefore Maidstone will identify other options to separate litter using on-street recycling bins.

A significant amount of litter collected manually or mechanically can still be recycled. Therefore the Council will explore all opportunities to separate this recycling, including using recycling sacks on the hand-barrows and working with Kent County Council to procure an outlet for waste from the mechanical sweepers.

Extra Recycling Capacity

Currently households who produce more recycling than can fit in their recycling bin or black box are able to leave extra recycling next to it. This can be difficult and unfortunately many residents appear to stop recycling when their bin or box is full.

The Council will engage with residents to identify options for increasing the capture of recycling, particularly when their bin or box is full.

Initially a trial of clear recycling sacks will be explored with residents who currently are not able to store wheeled bins. Opportunities to make these sacks available to other residents via local retailers will also be investigated.

5. Energy Recovery

Maidstone's priority is to reduce the overall volume of waste requiring treatment and maximise diversion of waste from energy recovery to recycling and reuse. Energy recovery however presents a more favourable option to disposal through landfill. Therefore household waste which cannot be reused or recycled will be sent for energy recovery wherever possible. The Allington Energy from Waste (EfW) facility allows the recovery of energy from the majority of Maidstone's household waste.

6. Disposal

Disposal is the least favourable option as it is costly both environmentally and financially. Maidstone Borough Council is committed to maximising the diversion of waste away from disposal.

At present the only waste which is sent to landfill from Maidstone is bulky waste collected through the bulky waste service and the Saturday freighter. The Council is committed to achieving zero waste to landfill by 2015 with the support of Kent County Council, the waste disposal authority.

Public engagement and community ownership

The key to achieving the targets set out in this strategy will be engaging with the public and ensuring they understand the importance of managing their rubbish effectively, by reducing, reusing and recycling as much as possible.

Throughout the implementation of the Strategy, customer satisfaction will be measured and feedback sought in order to understand residents' views to waste reduction, reuse and recycling. This information will be used to focus campaigns on dispelling myths and overcoming barriers as well as ensuring initiatives with proven results are prioritised.

The following campaigns will be implemented to increase public engagement and community ownership:

Doorknocking

A widespread face to face engagement campaign will be carried out to firstly understand the barriers to recycling and then to dispel some of the myths and improve awareness.

It is important that this campaign compliments the service improvements, for example it will be carried out to support increasing recycling in flats.

Think Green NOT Grey

A comprehensive campaign to encourage residents to recycle more and promote awareness that most items can now be recycled will be launched. This will include branding of the services, information stickers on residents' wheeled bins and roadshow events.

Resident feedback has demonstrated that some are still confused about what can be recycled and if in doubt the items are often thrown away. It is important to change this behaviour so recycling is considered in the first instance and only the few non-recyclable items are put in the rubbish bin.

Monitoring of the campaign's success will help shape it going forward. This will enable new initiatives to be trialled following feedback from residents about barriers to recycling.

A strong brand will be created to ensure that residents can relate to the services and understand what happens beyond the bin being left out for collection.

Incentives

The use of incentives to encourage recycling has been trialled widely across the UK following recent government support. These vary greatly from complex loyalty point systems to simple raffle prizes; however overall have been found to have a positive impact on recycling.

The Council will explore options to introduce an incentive for local residents to regularly participate in the recycling services. Due to the high administrative requirements, a complex loyalty card scheme will not be considered, however other incentives will be identified.

Reuse and Recycling Directory

An online reuse and recycling directory will be designed to help residents understand what can be recycled as well as some more innovative ideas on recycling and reuse around the home. This will be used in conjunction with the other campaigns to help boost recycling awareness and increase capture rates.

Recycling Champions

Prior to the launch of the weekly food waste collections in January 2011, the service was trialled with some "foodies". Testimonials from these residents were used to great effect on the radio, website and in the local press.

Using local residents who are already committed to recycling to engage with others less interested will help reinforce the Council's key messages. A recycling champion scheme will be set up to identify key people within the community who would be happy to assist with the promotion of recycling services

Social Media

Social media is becoming an increasingly important tool to engage with people in a more informal way. The Council already uses Twitter and Facebook to promote services, however there is still a greater potential to use these to spread wider recycling and reuse messages. The use of social media will be incorporated into all awareness campaigns in the future.

Financial implications

Over the past three years, Maidstone has significantly improved the efficiency of the waste and recycling services. Joining in partnership with Ashford and Swale Borough Councils and Kent County Council has enabled Maidstone to save in excess of £1 million per year. At the same time, services have also been improved with enhanced recycling collections and weekly food waste collections. The Services are projected to cost £2.5 million in 2014/15, which is in the region of £38 per household. However, the contract price will be reviewed annually to take into account property growth and inflation.

By increasing recycling above 50%, Maidstone will benefit from a share in any additional savings generated by Kent County Council through reduced disposal costs and additional recycle income. Whilst the specific financial benefits of exceeding 50% are currently unknown, if recycling levels are not maintained costs are expected to increase. The Council will continue to work with Ashford and Swale Borough Councils and Kent County Council to maximise the value of recycle and manage the share of profits across the Partnership.

The costs of implementing this strategy will predominantly be met from the existing recycling budget. Partnership funding will be sought for larger initiatives including the reuse of bulky waste and street litter recycling.

The Kent Resource Partnership has also committed to provide funding in the region of £40,000 towards a residents' communication campaign.

Further details

If you require any details please contact the waste and recycling team on 01622 602600 or email waste@maidstone.gov.uk

Alternatively information on waste and recycling initiatives can be found on the Council's website at www.maidstone.gov.uk/recyclingrubbishandwaste