

Communities, Housing and Environment Committee

19 July 2016

Is the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting?

Yes

Street Cleansing Asset Management Plan – Review of Litter and Dog Waste Bins

Final Decision-Maker	Communities, Housing and Environment Committee
Lead Head of Service	Head of Environment and Public Realm
Lead Officer and Report Author	Street Scene Operations Manager
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. That the work being undertaken to record all bins on a street cleansing asset register be noted; and
2. That the Committee considers the two options to remove dog waste bins either gradually (Option 1) or all at one time (Option 2); and
3. That the Committee agrees the option to be implemented.

This report relates to the following corporate priorities:

- Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all – providing appropriate bins for the collection of litter and dog waste to improve cleansing standards

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Corporate Leadership Team	21 June 2016
Communities, Housing and Environment Committee	19 July 2016

Street Cleansing Asset Management Plan – Review of Litter and Dog Waste Bins

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Over the past few months a review of all litter and dog waste bins has been carried out in order to assess their condition, map their location and record them on an asset register.
 - 1.2 The review has identified a large number of dog waste bins which are no longer fit for purpose. Replacement of these bins would exceed the budget available for this purpose.
 - 1.3 The provision of bins for the separate collection of dog waste is also posing an increased disposal cost on the street cleansing budget and therefore the future delivery of the service needs to be considered.
 - 1.4 The purpose of this report is for the Committee to consider proposals for the provision of dog waste and litter bins that can be accommodated within existing budgets and which will encourage responsible dog ownership and reduce littering levels across the Borough.
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2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Council currently has approximately 1500 litter bins and 354 dog waste bins which are emptied and maintained by the Street Cleansing, Grounds Maintenance or Waste Collection Teams.
- 2.2 The Street Cleansing Service currently costs £1.4 million per year and includes the emptying of litter bins (excluding those in parks and play areas), emptying of dog waste bins, litter-picking, removal of fly-tipping, scheduled cleansing of high and medium density roads, mechanical sweeping and permanent presence in the Town Centre.
- 2.3 Within the Mid Kent Joint Waste Contract there is a requirement for the waste collection crews to empty 345 litter bins within the rural areas on a fortnightly basis. For this service the Council currently pays £16,153 per annum, which equates to £1.80 per collection. This cost is higher than compared with the emptying of a domestic wheeled bin which is £0.54 per collection. The estimated cost for the street cleansing team to empty a dog waste bin is £1.36 per collection.
- 2.4 A number of Parish Councils also provide dog waste bins which are emptied through private contracts.
- 2.5 In 2011/12, the Council's Budget Strategy identified a potential saving of £33,000 from the Environment Portfolio through the withdrawal of dog waste bins. However, this proposal was unpopular and therefore alternative savings were identified.

- 2.6 However, a campaign was launched to promote the use of “any bin” for the disposal of dog waste including litter bins and residents’ household rubbish bins.
- 2.7 The decision was also taken not to install any new dog waste bins, which has resulted in a steady decline in numbers over the past couple of years.
- 2.8 In 2012/13 the contract to empty and maintain the bins ended and the service transferred to the Street Cleansing Team to operate. This was intended to allow more flexibility within the service and enable future savings to be made.
- 2.9 Whilst the service previously cost £40,933 per annum, only £19,670 per annum remains within the Cleansing budget because the funding was reallocated in 2013/14 to cover the street cleansing costs within the Mid Kent Waste Collection Contract.
- 2.10 Since then the dog waste bins have been emptied by a dedicated collection crew within the Street Cleansing Team. As this waste is not mixed with other litter it has to undergo specialist disposal which currently costs the Council approximately £25,000 per annum and has contributed to recent overspend within the Cleansing Budget.
- 2.11 Work has been undertaken with the Disposal Authority, Kent County Council, to mix this waste with litter so it can be disposed of through the existing street cleansing waste streams. Unfortunately this has been unsuccessful due to the dog waste remaining in concentrated pockets within the litter resulting in operational difficulties at both local waste transfer stations. As the Council is currently unable to present the waste in a suitable condition to the Waste Disposal Authority, it is liable for the disposal costs of the waste.

2.12 The current cost of emptying dog waste bins is:

	£
Staff salary costs	£21,849
Vehicle costs	£12,870
Disposal of waste	£24,289
TOTAL	£59,008
Budget	£19,670
Variance	-£39,338

2.13 Therefore for the emptying of dog bins there is a deficit of almost £40,000 within the Street Cleansing budget.

2.14 Kent County Council has agreed to fund the separate disposal of dog waste until the end of July in order for Maidstone to identify a solution to the current problems. However, if Maidstone is unable to fully commingle dog waste and litter, the Council will be responsible for the disposal costs. This could only be achieved through the complete replacement of dog waste bins with commingled litter and dog waste bins.

Review of Bin Provision

- 2.15 Until recently the exact number and location of litter bins and dog waste bins was only recorded through paper lists and local knowledge of the street cleansing operatives.
- 2.16 Work has now been completed to map each bin in order for an asset register to be maintained and will enable the condition of the bins and frequency of emptying to be monitored.
- 2.17 There is a range of bins currently in use including dedicated dog waste bins, post-mounted and free standing litter bins and commingled litter and dog waste bins.
- 2.18 Due to the nature of the waste and their construction, dog waste bins have a shorter life span of 6-8 years compared with standard litter or commingled bins which have a lifespan of over 12 years.
- 2.19 Within the Street Cleansing budget there is an annual budget of £6,000 for litter bins. This would fund 21 new or replacement litter bins which does not currently cover the number of bins requiring replacement and the requests for new bins.
- 2.20 Since 2010/11 there has been no budget available to replace any dog waste bins.
- 2.21 This has resulted in the number of new bins being limited every year as well as damaged dog waste bins being replaced with commingled litter and dog waste bins. In the past 12 months, 23 dog waste bins have been removed due to the bins being no longer fit for purpose with no complaints from the public received about the reduced number of dog bins
- 2.22 In addition, over the past few years surplus income from fixed penalty notices for littering has been used for the provision of additional bins. In 2015/16, 20 bins were purchased from the environmental enforcement budget.
- 2.23 The purpose of the review of litter and dog bins was to firstly determine the condition of the bins and therefore the expected maintenance costs, and secondly to allocate asset numbers to each bin enabling them to be tracked more effectively. This will help residents to report overflowing or damaged litter bins through the website.
- 2.24 Asset numbers will be installed on all litter bins by the beginning of September and will then be incorporated into the online reporting form.
- 2.25 The work already undertaken has identified that there are currently 150 dog waste bins which have or will reach the end of their usable life within the next 6 months and need to be removed or replaced. The cost to replace these bins would be approximately £39,000.

- 2.26 Therefore in order to continue to deliver the same service the Council would need to identify additional funding of £39,338 per annum to meet operational costs and £39,000 capital funding for replacement bins. This cannot be met from within existing budget allocations and means a decision is required to either make extra funding available to enable the current service to continue or to reduce the service to a level that can be funded from within the existing budget.
- 2.27 In light of the Medium Term Financial Strategy savings targets, it is not viable to maintain the current provision of dog waste bins and invest capital into new bins which will only have a lifespan of 6-8 years.
- 2.28 It is therefore recommended that the Committee consider two options for the withdrawal of the dog waste bins:
- Option 1:** Gradual withdrawal of dog waste bins over the next 2-3 years as the bins reach the end of their life, with the removal of 150 bins this year.
- Option 2:** Complete withdrawal of dog waste bins this year.
- 2.29 Whilst the gradual withdrawal of the provision of separate dog waste bins will enable greater time to promote behavioural change amongst dog owners, it will not immediately address all of the financial issues of the service.
- 2.30 The complete withdrawal of the dog waste bins will require a comprehensive communication campaign to ensure dog owners are aware how to dispose of their dog waste responsibly, however will enable a saving of £19,670 from the Cleansing Budget and reduce overall costs by nearly £60,000.
- 2.31 Details of the proposed communication campaign are included in Appendix B.
- 2.32 If Option 1 is agreed by the Committee, the Council will still be required to pay the disposal costs for the dog waste collected from the remaining bins. This is anticipated to be around £15,000 per annum. This will continue to reduce until all dog waste bins are removed.
- 2.33 Option 2 will enable the Council to reduce staff, vehicle and disposal costs through the withdrawal of the dedicated collection service. It is unlikely that this would result in the need for any redundancies or redeployment as an upcoming vacancy will not be filled until the decision is agreed. However staff affected would be consulted should any changes be required to their working arrangements.
- 2.34 Many of the dog waste bins are already in close proximity to litter bins, however where this is not the case, a replacement litter bin would be provided with the signage "litter and dog waste". It is projected that approximately 60 litter bins would be required at a cost of £16,800, which would be funded from the Cleansing Budget and the anticipated £20,000 surplus income from littering fixed penalty notices and the existing street cleansing budget.

- 2.35 There are a number of dog waste bins which are provided and funded by Parish Councils. It will remain the decision of each Parish Council as to whether to retain these bins, although some have already taken the decision to remove their bins.
- 2.36 A small number of these bins are emptied by the Council for a charge, and whilst it is anticipated that this could be maintained due to the low number of bins and the income received, the Council would work with the Parish Council's to identify whether other options may be more sustainable, such as installing commingled bins.
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3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 The Committee could agree Option 1, the gradual removal of all dog waste bins over the next 2-3 years through natural wastage as the bins reach their end of life.
- 3.2 Alternatively the Committee could decide Option 2, the complete removal of all dog waste bins alongside a comprehensive communications campaign is implemented.
- 3.3 Alternatively the Committee could reject the recommendations and request that a report is presented to the Policy and Resources Committee to seek additional funding for replacing the Council's dog waste bins and maintaining the current service provision.
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4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 It is recommended that the Committee consider and agree the implementation of Option 2, the complete removal of all dog waste bins as this enables a saving of £19,670 per annum and the reduction in the Cleansing Budget's overspend of nearly £40,000.
- 4.2 Option 2 also enables the Council to dispose of this waste more sustainably alongside other litter and will increase the lifespan of the new litter bins which are provided in their place.
- 4.3 Overall Option 2 allows dog owners to continue to dispose of their dog waste responsibly but without the need of a dedicated service which is putting a financial strain on the Cleansing Service and requires specialist disposal arrangements.
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5. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 5.1 Previous proposals to remove all dog waste bins received negative feedback from dog owners and resulted in the plans being abandoned. However since 2011, over 25 damaged bins have been removed and replaced with litter bins.

- 5.2 There have been very few complaints received regarding the replacement of these dog waste bins with litter bins.
- 5.3 Significant communications work has also been carried out to ensure that “any bin will do”.

6. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 6.1 A comprehensive communications plan will be delivered to include signage directing dog owners to nearby litter bins and to encourage responsible dog ownership.
- 6.2 Following approval of the recommendations, a timetable for the removal of the bins will be prepared and shared with Members. The dog waste bins would then be removed along with any posts and where required, new litter bins will be installed.

7. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	Providing appropriate bins for the collection of litter and dog waste to improve cleansing standards	Head of Environment & Public Realm
Risk Management	There is a reputational risk to the Council to remove dog waste bins however action needs to be taken to address the deteriorating condition of the Council’s assets. The provision of alternative bins for dog waste ensures that dog owners can still dispose of their waste responsibly without the Council incurring substantial additional costs.	Head of Environment and Public Realm
Financial	There is currently a £40,000 deficit within the Street Cleansing Budget for the disposal of dog waste. The recommendations within this report seek to reduce the revenue and capital cost of providing the service.	[Section 151 Officer & Finance Team]
Staffing	It is unlikely that there would be the need for any redundancies or redeployment	Head of Environment and Public

	due to upcoming vacancies, however staff consultation with those affected will be carried out if there is any requirement to change their working arrangements.	Realm
Legal		[Legal Team]
Equality Impact Needs Assessment		[Policy & Information Manager]
Environmental/Sustainable Development		[Head of Service or Manager]
Community Safety		[Head of Service or Manager]
Human Rights Act		[Head of Service or Manager]
Procurement		[Head of Service & Section 151 Officer]
Asset Management	All litter bins will be recorded on the service's asset register including asset numbers enabling information about usage and condition to be managed more effectively.	Head of Environment and Public Realm

8. REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix A: Location of Dog Waste Bins
- Appendix B: Draft Communications Campaign

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None