

Overview and Scrutiny Committee Environmental and Waste Crime Enforcement Review

January 2024



Committee Membership:

Councillors: English (Chairman), Cleator (Vice-Chairman), Blackmore, Cannon, Clark, Conyard, Eagle, Gooch, Hastie, Hinder, Round, S Thompson and Webb.

Contact details for the Committee can be found here:

[Your Councillors - Maidstone Borough Council](#)

Report prepared by Cassie Beckley, Democratic Services Officer, on behalf of the
Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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Introduction

In June 2023, the Council’s Overview and Scrutiny Committee (the Committee) agreed to review Environmental and Waste Crime Enforcement commencing across October and November 2023.

This report outlines the review timeline and resulting recommendations produced by the Committee.

The aim of the review was the:

‘Identification of required actions and/or policies to improve the Council’s Environmental and Waste Crime enforcement services’.

Approach to the Review

The review has taken place mainly through verbal questioning, supported by written information within the agenda papers.

The table below outlines the meetings that took place, the respective attendees and evidence provided. Links to the information have been included for each meeting.

Meeting	Attendees	Evidence provided
17 Oct 2023	<p>Cabinet Member for Environmental Services</p> <p>Head of Environmental Services and Public Realm</p> <p>Public Realm Operations Manager</p> <p>Waste Crime Manager</p>	<p>Waste Crime Enforcement Team Overview, including relevant policies.</p> <p>Verbal Q&A Session with attendees.</p> <p>Agenda for Overview & Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday 17th October, 2023, 6.30 pm :: Maidstone Borough Council</p>
21 Nov 2023	<p>Cabinet Member for Environmental Services</p> <p>Head of Environmental Services and Public Realm</p> <p>Public Realm Operations Manager</p> <p>Waste Crime Manager</p>	<p>Verbal Q&A session with attendees to build on previous discussion</p> <p>Agenda for Overview & Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday 21st November, 2023, 6.30 pm :: Maidstone Borough Council</p>
19 Dec 2023	<p>Cabinet Member for Environmental Services (as a Visiting Member)</p>	<p>Review of draft recommendations</p> <p>Agenda for Overview & Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday 19th December, 2023, 6.30 pm :: Maidstone Borough Council</p>

Recommended Actions and Intended Outcomes

During the review, the Committee gave positive feedback on and were supportive of the service, and the future actions proposed by the Environmental and Waste Crime Enforcement team. It is important to highlight the Council's proactive stance in being willing and able to take the appropriate enforcement action where breaches occur.

The Committee's recommendations arising from the review will be directed to **the Cabinet Member for Environmental Services**. Where applicable, the Lead Officer for each action has been included. The recommendations produced by the Committee have been grouped and outlined below.

1. To produce further communications via assorted media in respect of successful enforcement action taken by the Council and its partner organisations, including:
 - a. Joint Working between the Waste Crime and Waste Management Teams;
 - b. A Spotlight on the Waste Crime Team in the next Borough Insight Magazine, including individual household's duty of care and updated fixed penalty notice charges; and
 - c. Via the Council's Social Media Pages

Intended Outcome (IO): To publicise the successful enforcement action being taken to the public, and to positively impact the Council's reputation.

Lead Officer (LO): Head of Environmental Services and Public Realm

2. That Members and Parish Councillors be given updated contact details of Housing and Housing Management Associations.

IO: To ensure that Members report issues to the correct organisations, addressing issues quickly.

3. That High Street and East Wards be considered as locations for any available pilot schemes.

IO: To support the officers request in identifying suitable areas for pilot schemes, with these Wards highlighted due to the close proximity of properties reducing any travel requirements, and the breaking into and vandalism of shared waste facilities occurring.

Lead Officer (LO): Head of Environmental Services and Public Realm

4. That the process notes outlining the actions taken in educating, informing and taking enforcement action against residents and/or organisations be provided to the Committee.

IO: To outline the process so that Members are able to report concerns to the appropriate Officers, due to the overlap in work between the Waste Management and Waste Crime Teams in addressing these issues.

LO: Waste Crime Manager and Waste Manager

5. That the next amended Annual High Speed Road Cleaning Programme be presented to the Committee for review.

IO: To ensure that the Committee can review the programme as concern was expressed at the increase in road litter, particularly in rural areas.

LO: Public Realm Operations Manager

6. That a briefing be provided to the Committee on the technology available to the Waste Crime Team in monitoring and enforcing against fly-tipping.

IO: To provide the Committee with further information on the technology used by the team, and that used to evade the Council's technology.

LO: Head of Environmental Services and Public Realm and Waste Crime Manager.

7. That the Waste Crime Team be supported in submitting a capital funding bid for use in obtaining technology to support service provision.

IO: The Waste Crime Team is currently applying for external funding that would support increasing the technology available to monitor and enforce against fly-tipping.

If unsuccessful, the Team should be supported in applying for capital funding to support this, as it would support the service overall. The Head of Environmental Services and Public Realm has suggested a reporting method to Members in using the funding.

LO: Head of Environmental Services and Public Realm and Waste Crime Manager

8. That the Cabinet Member liaise with Medway Council to encourage the authority to continue providing assistance to voluntary litter picking groups, as well as local litter picking groups across Maidstone, including the Council's stance on providing assistance to those groups.

IO: To encourage continued support for the work conducted by voluntary litter picking groups.

9. That Medway Council and Kent County Council be asked to share information and figures on whether removing the charge for bulky waste collections has impacted fly-tipping and enforcement action.

IO: To review if that approach has been beneficial, such as reducing spending on responding to fly-tipping and taking enforcement action, and if so, to consider whether it could be trialled in Maidstone.

LO: Head of Environmental Services and Public Realm.

10. That the Cabinet Member review the following suggestion for its feasibility:

That a dashboard or similar reporting system be set up with the following items reported to Members on a regular basis, for instance, a six month cycle:

- a. Number of waste (crime) incidents identified, and those reported, and a separate category for (non-crime) household waste spilt from communal areas (as an example);
- b. Identification of areas in which incidents are more frequent. (similar to that presented at the October 2023 Overview and Scrutiny Meeting);
- c. Time taken to clean up incident, with notification of stresses to service capacity;
- d. Consequence to service/taxpayer, including costs;
- e. Disposal arrangement – recycling via sorting at the Council's depot, or to landfill;
- f. Reporting of enforcement events, fines, police action, etc.
- g. Lessons and learning, for example, in conjunction with 'Neighbourhood Watch' and Litter picking groups. Members awareness and actions.

11. That the Cabinet Member and the Committee Chairman jointly write to the Medway and Kent County Councils, urging them to reconsider their charging policy for residents of other boroughs in using their Household Waste Recycling Centres.

IO: To ask for reconsideration of the policy and request a practical alternative given the impact to residents.

Summary of Stakeholder Evidence

Internal Stakeholders

Councillor Patrik Garten, Cabinet Member for Environmental Services

The Cabinet Member for Environmental Services attended all three meetings across which the review was held engaging in Q&A with the Committee.

Jennifer Stevens, Head of Environmental Services and Public Realm

As the relevant Head of Service for the review topic, the Head of Environmental Services and Public Realm attended the 17 October 2023 and 21 November 2023 Committee Meetings. The Head of Environmental Services and Public Realm answered questions regarding past and proposed approaches to education and enforcement action (including the pilot schemes); the team's intention to better utilise social media and potential sources of funding.

John Edwards, Public Realm Operations Manager

As the relevant Manager to the review, this officer attended the 17 October 2023 and 21 November 2023 Committee Meetings. The Public Realm Operations Manager outlined how the team intended to tackle fly tipping in problem areas, such as high-speed roads and rural areas and through development of enforcement technology.

Carl McIvor, Waste Crime Manager

As a new officer, the Waste Crime Manager attended the 17 October 2023 and 21 November 2023 Committee Meetings and answered queries concerning the current and future processes for education and enforcement.

Thanks to Witnesses

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee would like to extend its thanks to the stakeholders that supported the review, either through providing written evidence and/or attending a meeting of the Committee.

APPENDIX 1 – Information Relating To The Review

Written Information

Agenda and Minutes for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 17 October 2023: [Your Councillors - Maidstone Borough Council](#)

Agenda and Minutes for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 21 November 2023: [Your Councillors - Maidstone Borough Council](#)

Agenda and Minutes for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 19 December 2023: [Your Councillors - Maidstone Borough Council](#)

Committee Membership during the Review

Councillors: English (Chairman), Cleator (Vice-Chair), Blackmore, Cannon, Clark, Conyard, Eagle, Gooch, Hastie, Hinder, Round, S Thompson and Webb.

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Appendix 2 – List of Recommendations arising from the Review.

Recommendation	Intended Outcome	Cabinet Members/s and Officers
<p>1. To produce further communications via assorted media in respect of successful enforcement action taken by the Council and its partner organisations, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Joint Working between the Waste Crime and Waste Management Teams; b. A Spotlight on the Waste Crime Team in the next Borough Insight Magazine, including individual household's duty of care and updated fixed penalty notice charges; and c. Via the Council's Social Media Pages 	<p>To publicise the successful enforcement action being taken to the public, and to positively impact the Council's reputation.</p>	<p>Cabinet Members for Environmental Services</p> <p>Head of Environmental Services and Public Realm.</p>
<p>2. That Members and Parish Councillors be given updated contact details of Housing and Housing Management Associations.</p>	<p>To ensure that Members report issues to the correct organisations, addressing issues quickly.</p>	<p>Cabinet Member for Environmental Services.</p>
<p>3. That High Street and East Wards be considered as locations for any available pilot schemes.</p>	<p>To support the officers request in identifying suitable areas for pilot schemes to be introduced, with these Wards highlighted due to the close proximity of properties reducing any travel requirements, and breaking into</p>	<p>Cabinet Member for Environmental Services.</p> <p>Head of Environmental Services and Public Realm.</p>

	and vandalism of shared waste facilities.	
4. That the process note outlining the actions taken in educating, informing and taking enforcement against residents and/or organisations be provided to the Committee.	To outline the process so that Members are able to report concerns to the appropriate Officers, due to the overlap in work between the Waste Management and Waste Crime Teams in addressing these issues.	Cabinet Member for Environmental Services. Waste Crime Manager Waste Manager
5. That the next amended Annual High Speed Road Cleaning Programme be presented to the Committee for review.	To ensure that the Committee can review the programme as concern was expressed at the increase in road litter, particularly in rural areas.	Cabinet Member for Environmental Services. Public Realm Operations Manager
6. That a Briefing be provided to the Committee on the technology available to the Team in monitoring and enforcing against fly-tipping.	To provide the Committee with further information on the technology used by the Team, and that used to evade the Council technology.	Cabinet Member for Environmental Services Head of Environmental Services and Public Realm Waste Crime Manager
7. That the Waste Crime Team be supported in submitting a capital funding bid for use in obtaining technology to support service provision.	The Waste Crime Team is currently applying for external funding that would support increasing the technology available to monitor and enforce against fly-tipping. If unsuccessful, the Team should be supported in applying for capital funding to support this as it would support the service overall. The Head of Environmental Services and Public Realm has suggested a reporting method to Members in using the funding.	Cabinet Member for Environmental Services Head of Environmental Services and Public Realm Waste Crime Manager

<p>8. That the Cabinet Member liaise with Medway Council to encourage the authority to continue providing assistance to voluntary litter picking groups, as well as local litter picking groups across Maidstone, including the Council's stance on providing assistance to those groups.</p>	<p>To encourage continued support for the work conducted by voluntary litter picking groups.</p>	<p>Cabinet Member for Environmental Services</p>
<p>9. That Medway Council be asked to share information and figures on whether removing the charge for bulky waste collections has impacted fly-tipping and enforcement action.</p>	<p>To review if that approach had been beneficial, such as reducing spending on responding to fly-tipping and taking enforcement action, and if so, to consider whether it could be trialled in Maidstone.</p>	<p>Cabinet Member for Environmental Services Head of Environmental Services and Public Realm</p>
<p>10. That the Cabinet Member review the following suggestion for its feasibility:</p> <p>That a dashboard or similar reporting system be set up with the following items reported to Members on a regular basis, for instance, a six month cycle:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Number of waste (crime) incidents identified, and those reported, and a separate category for (non-crime) household waste spilt from communal areas (as an example); 		

<ul style="list-style-type: none">b. Identification of areas in which incidents are more frequent. (similar to that presented at the October 2023 Overview and Scrutiny Meeting);c. Time taken to clean up incident, with notification of stresses to service capacity;d. Consequence to service/taxpayer, including costs;e. Disposal arrangement – recycling via sorting at the Council’s depot, or to landfill;f. Reporting of enforcement events, fines, police action, etc.g. Lessons and learning, for example, in conjunction with ‘Neighbourhood Watch’ and Litter picking groups. Members awareness and actions.		
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<p>11. That the Cabinet Member for Environmental Services and the Committee Chairman jointly write to the Medway and Kent County Councils, urging them to re-consider their charging policy for residents of other boroughs in using their HWRCs.</p>	<p>To ask for re-consideration of the policy and request a practical alternative given the impact to residents.</p>	<p>Cabinet Member for Environmental Services Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny</p>
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