

Making Waste Work for Maidstone

Municipal Year 2011/12



Committee Membership:

Councillor Blackmore (Chairman)
Councillor English
Councillor Field
Councillor FitzGerald (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Hinder

Councillor D Mortimer
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Councillor Patterson
Councillor Yates

Chairman's Summary

Councillor Annabelle Blackmore



Waste collection and recycling is one of Maidstone Borough Council's most important and highly visible services to all the residents of Maidstone Borough. It has a significant impact on our visual environment and also our public health.

The Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee recognises the tendering process for our waste and recycling will be highly competitive. This Review was set up because the Council's waste and recycling services contract is due for renewal in 2013, giving the Council an opportunity to re-examine how these important services are delivered across the Borough.

Currently Maidstone Borough Council retains a weekly collection system and although this may be the best option we must seek to improve our waste and recycling service where possible providing the benefits outweigh the potential costs. During our review councillors made visits to different recycling industry professionals to view the range of services which are available.

The Committee would like to thank all the organisations and individuals who have helped us by giving their evidence. In particular Paul Vanston from the Waste Resources and Action Programme who has provided significant support and guidance to the Committee. His approach with good humour was truly appreciated.

Finally I would like to record my thanks to Orla Sweeney, Overview & Scrutiny Officer, for her support during the creation of this report and also her tireless minute taking during our meetings. Her positive approach deserves our particular thanks.

Making Waste Work for Maidstone

Waste and recycling was chosen as a topic for review by the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee in the knowledge that the Council's waste contract was due to go to out to tender for a 10 year period; a critical contract serving a core function of the Council. The Committee was satisfied that the model being used for determining the waste contract was the best available for Maidstone as it included extensive modelling and the project had received an investment of £65,000 from Kent County Council. The model to be adopted by Maidstone, Ashford, Swale and Canterbury (Mid Kent) was the same one used by Dover and Shepway (East Kent). As part of the new partnership contract arrangements Maidstone would retain its current recycling system, only adding an extra insert to its recycling bin. Maidstone's current weekly food collection arrangements were cited by Government as a preferred system.

The Committee decided to focus its investigations on three main areas where it could add value. These were waste reduction, the Freighter service and Bulky waste collection and Plastics.

This is inline with the principles applied by the Council in dealing with waste which are derived from the EU waste Framework Directive (WFD) and adopted into UK domestic legislation on 12 December 2010. The main features of this are the application of the waste hierarchy which put prevention, minimisation and reuse above recycling, energy recovery and disposal. It also cites a separate collection of paper, metal, plastic and glass by 2015 and a recycling target of 50% from household by 2020. Maidstone Borough Council's Waste and Recycling Strategy 2010-2015 supports the EU directive and recycling targets set.



Waste Hierarchy

The Committee was initially keen to pursue commercial waste collection opportunities and the potential revenue streams available to Maidstone Borough Council alone or in partnership with neighbouring authorities from collecting commercial waste from smaller businesses as this could lead to the development of a sustainable revenue stream. During the course of the review the Waste

team secured Waste & Resources Action Programme (WRAP) funding to explore the viability of this. Gravesham Council has a commercial waste contract and the Committee feels that there is an opportunity work to with Gravesham as part of the feasibility study, utilising its experience and exploring possible partnership opportunities.

Recommendations

Waste Reduction

Reducing waste is the key to the Council continuing to move forward. The Committee's visit to Maidstone Prison's Recycling Unit helped demonstrate the financial benefits to an organisation in reducing its waste. As a result of the approach taken at Maidstone Prison with food waste and the use of a food composter, £26,000 is saved due to no longer needing a kitchen waste collection.

The Committee visited Aylesford Newsprint to gain an understanding of the benefits of paper recycling as paper will be collected separately as part of the new waste contract with the addition of an insert to the recycling bin. Aylesford Newsprint uses 100% recycled product and produced 500 tonnes of paper for white newsprint each year.

It is clear that there have been vast improvements in Maidstone in recent years and following the Best Value review in 2009 which resulted in the creation of a specific waste strategy for Maidstone and included an action plan. Maidstone is now one of the top performers in the country, on track to meet the Government's 50% recycling target in 2020 following the introduction of the food waste collection in 2011 (figure 1). Importantly too, there has been a reduction in the volume of household waste (figure 2). The National 'Love Food Hate Waste' campaign has contributed to a 10% reduction in waste overall.

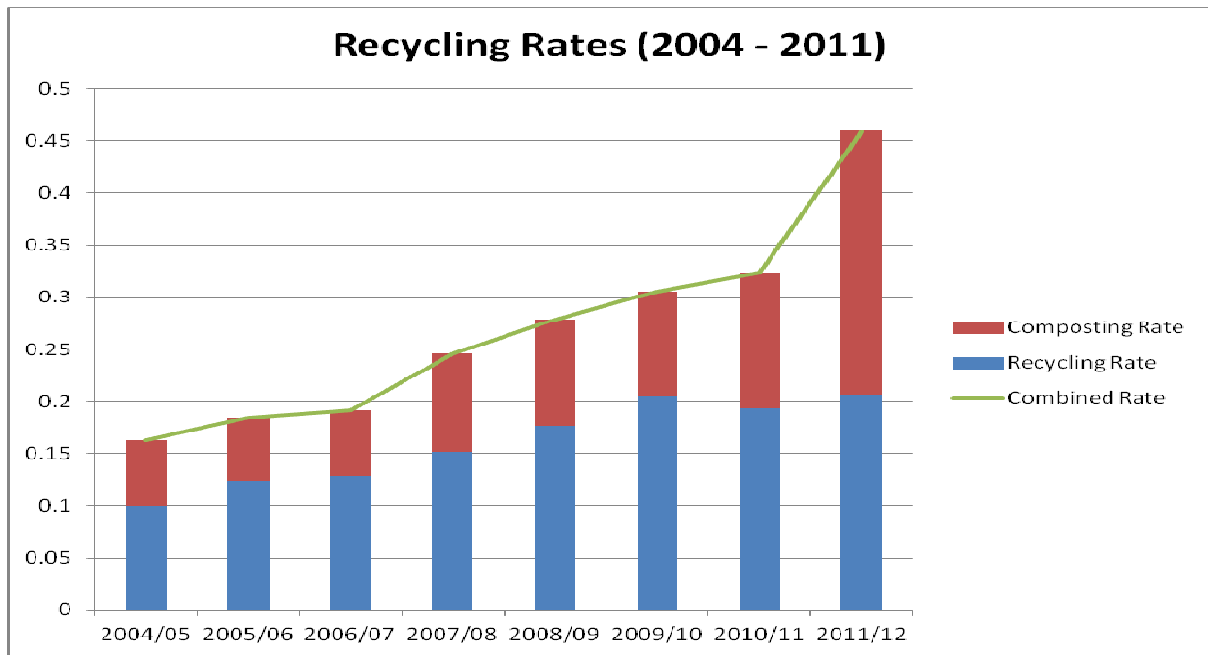


Figure 1 (supplied by Waste Team, Maidstone Borough Council)

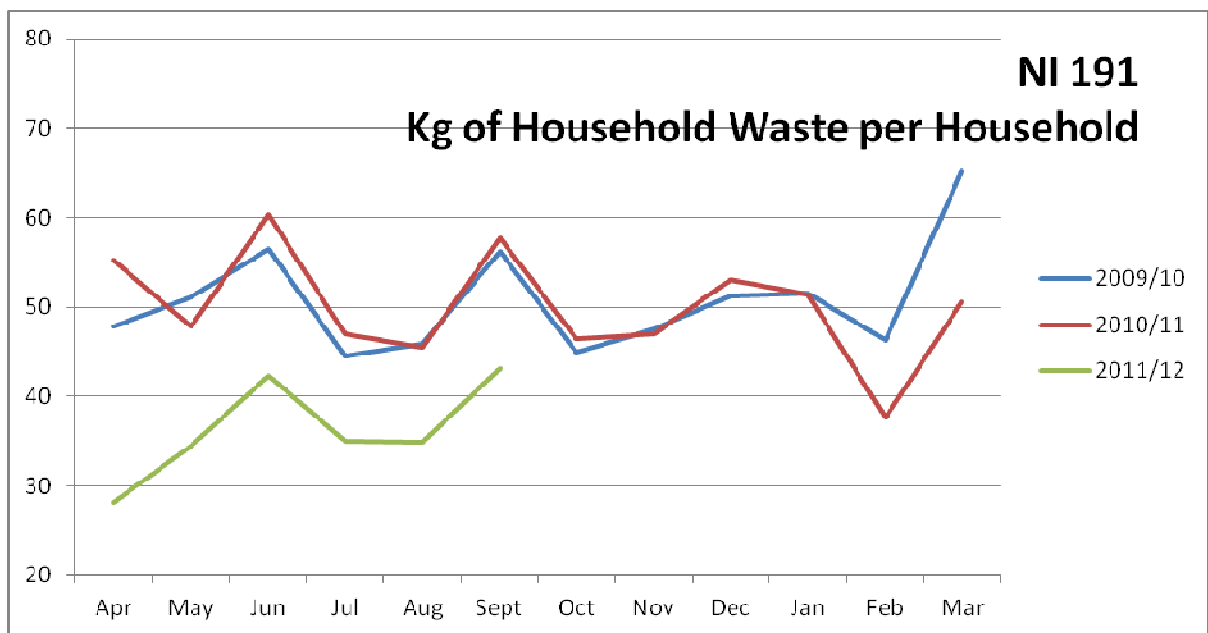


Figure 2 (supplied by Waste Team, Maidstone Borough Council)

The Best Value review of waste and recycling collection services in 2009 identified that Maidstone performed badly in comparison to other Kent authorities. £500,000 was invested to make changes to the service (including £300,000 from the Kent Waste Partnership) which included the addition of a separate food waste collection service. Steve Goulette, Assistant Director of Environment and Regulatory Services informed the Committee that as a result of this, satisfaction levels had risen. The Residents Satisfaction Survey, an independent postal survey conducted by Lake Market Research from November 2011 to January 2012, records residents satisfaction with doorstep recycling at 78%.

The Waste team should be commended on their achievements thus far. The communications campaign for the implementation of the food waste collection received a Local Authority Recycling Advisory Committee (LARAC) award in 2011.

The needs of flats, terraced housing and houses in multiple occupation are not accommodated as well as others in the borough for recycling and food waste collection. It has been suggested that there are problems, particularly in flats, with the contamination of bins when it is attempted. The Committee feels that residents should be engaged with to establish what they want to achieve. Consideration should be given to low literacy, colour blind, the elderly and those where English is not the first language when designing a system that works. It views these as possible obstacles that will need to be overcome when implementing a recycling system that caters essentially for a small community.

Opportunities should be sought through the planning process where conditions can be explicit in requirements for recycling provisions and there should be an emphasis on ward members to check planning permissions.

That the Waste Team to present the Cabinet Member with an options report regarding the replacement of bins for flats, terraced housing and houses of multiple occupancy to move forward with waste and recycling and food collection in line with the rest of the borough

The new waste contract will allow glass to be placed in the recycling bin and it will be then reused as road aggregate. If glass is brought to a bring site in the borough it will be recycled. Tetra Packsⁱ can only be recycled if brought to the bring sites in the borough. The Committee feels it is important that residents are aware of some of the limitations with the recycling collection to encourage participation with bring sites and increase recycling.

It is fully understood that the introduction of the food waste collection was a step towards reducing waste. In addressing this we begin to consider our buying habits which will impact on packaging and therefore household waste being reduced as a result. Retailers are addressing the issue of food waste and packaging. The culture of Buy One Get One Free (BOGOF) and unnecessary packaging are included in the aims of the Courtauld Commitment. To demonstrate their commitment to cutting waste from their products 35 of the major grocery retailers, suppliers and brands have signed up to this voluntary agreement which aims to:

'We waste £12bn a year on food which we buy and then just throw away. Understanding 'use by' dates and knowing the best way to store food to keep it fresher for longer can help save us pounds.'

LOVE FOOD hate waste

- Design out grocery packaging waste growth by 2008 - This first objective has been met despite increases in sales and population;
- Deliver absolute reductions in packaging waste by 2010; and
- Help reduce the amount of food the nation's householders throw away by 155,000 tonnes by 2010, against a 2008 baseline. Further information on the Courtauld Commitment can be found on the [WRAP](#)ⁱⁱ website.

That there is a continued education on food wastage and promotion of recycling and a feature in the Borough Update outlining how much food is thrown away in Maidstone

That flexible and cost effective options in relation to the use of new technologies and changes to collectables should be included in the terms of the new waste contract. It should also include a proactive clause for partners to explore opportunities in the market.

The Freighter Service & Bulky Collection

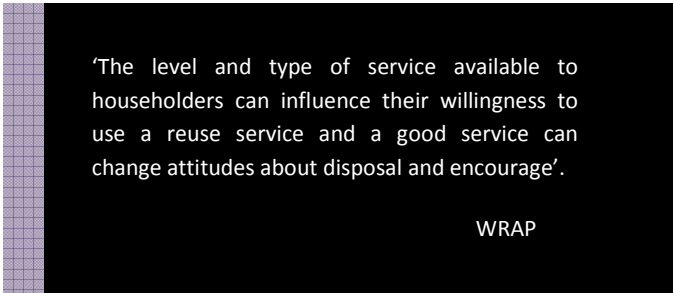
The prevention of waste going to landfill is key to reducing waste. The Committee investigated the current usage of the Freighter service and Bulky collection. Councillors spoke to residents and Officers and found the usage of the Freighter service had dropped since the collection of garden waste ceased. The Committee's findings in September 2011 when they monitored the service showed that what was collected now was mainly seasonal waste being disposed of by those unable to take it to a Household Recycling Site. The Weekend Freighter monitoring undertaken in March 2010 for a six week period had showed low usage at some sites. At this time garden waste and wood were the highest types of waste being disposed of. It was as a result of this monitoring exercise that garden waste was no longer collected in this way and since then it is understood that usage of the service had fallen further. The Council now provide a fortnightly garden waste collection service. Residents can recycle garden waste by hiring a garden waste bin or by purchasing garden waste sacks.

The Committee explored alternatives to the Freighter Service and Bulky Collection. The waste collected by the Bulky collection Service was estimated to be at least 33% reusable furniture. It was felt that the Bulky Collection could offer opportunities for charities or a social enterprise to reuse and resell what was collected. This would reduce the Council's waste overall. NOAH enterprise, a homeless charity and social enterprise based in Luton, Bedfordshire offered the Committee a viable alternative. The model they described was highly effective

and provided a win-win solution to the local authority and the charity supporting vulnerable people in the community. NOAH did not 'cherry-pick' when they made collections. They had a constructive relationship with the local authority providing a win-win solution for both parties. The local authority took away their rubbish free of charge and NOAH prevented goods going to landfill.

NOAH began in 1987 with little means, providing soup and sandwiches to the homeless. The charity received donations of furniture for those it was helping to re home and they found they had a surplus. This provided a starting point from which the organisation has grown. The charity now finds accommodation for over 300 people each year. It has established a training centre, providing accredited training course in woodwork and furniture restoration, white good and refurbishment, warehousing, IT skills and Life skills. The Social Enterprise contributes to its sustainability as a charity and includes:

- Three Luton-based retail outlets selling a variety of new and used furniture, kitchen appliances, clothing and household goods;
- Furniture and appliance restoration and repair at its two warehouse sites; and
- A second hand furniture and kitchen appliance collection and reuse service.



'The level and type of service available to householders can influence their willingness to use a reuse service and a good service can change attitudes about disposal and encourage'.

WRAP

The skills developed by those being rehabilitated through the charity were utilised in every aspect of NOAH enterprise. The organisation is comprised of 35 full time paid employees and 100 volunteers a year through the Social Enterprise.

NOAH enterprise were interested in working with Maidstone Borough Council, if furniture could be stored they would collect it.

Freighter Service

The reuse and recycling of waste collected by the Freighter Service should be investigated by the Waste Team.

That the current usage of the Freighter service is monitored and the delivery of the service re-evaluated

Bulky Collection

That reuse and recycling of waste collected by the Bulky Collection should be investigated by the Waste Team, diverting from landfill by working with charities and other social partnerships

That a service provided by NOAH enterprise for the collection of furniture and white goods from Maidstone Borough Council's bulky collection should be investigated

That the relevant select committee and department at Kent County Council be contacted and the model used by NOAH Enterprise should be highlighted

That the use of the Gateway as a collection point for small items such as batteries, ink cartridges, energy saving light bulbs (containing mercury), small electrical items and plastic bottles should be explored with the involvement of local voluntary and charitable organisations

Plastics

The lack of standardisation in plastics prevents Maidstone Borough Council and others pursuing this area of reuse and recycling at present. The technology is being developed for dealing with mixed plastics and during the course of the new waste contract it will be possible to consider this as an option. The insert in bins that will initially be used for paper has the versatility to be used for other 'valuable' materials in the future.

The Committee visited Closed Loop in Dagenham, Essex. Closed Loop has strong links with Marks and Spencer and other leading retailers and manufacturers. A standardisation of plastics used by manufacturers would make it easier for the public to recycle. Closed Loop is engaging with packaging designers and manufacturers to design for recycling and want to encourage the increased collection of plastic bottles across the UK; domestic, commercial and in public places. They saw the partnership of local authorities as of vital

'Closed Loop is capable of recycling 35,000 tonnes of bottles each year.

875 million bottles that would otherwise have been exported for recycling, or sent to landfill, will now be reprocessed and remain in the UK. This represents nearly 10% of the plastic bottles that are currently collected for recycling in the UK, saving approximately 52,500 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions annually'.

Closed Loop

importance to the future of plastic recycling; it was felt that local authorities could form partnerships where retailers could not. The Kent Waste Partnership is already an excellent example of 13 councils working together.

Plastics were described to Members as an untapped 'raw material' and Councils have influence and control on where plastics were collected and were described by Closed Loop as 'primary producers'.

Officers should continue to lobby for the standardisation of plastics in products to make it easier for residents to recycle

The following recommendations were made during the course of the review in relation to the tendering strategy for the new waste contract.

- a) The communities and Overview and Scrutiny Committee would like clauses 13.1, 13.2 and 13.3 to be considered by Cabinet in its decision making and in making this decision the ramification of these clauses within the IAA (Inter Authority Agreement – Appendix3); and
- b) That an explanation is provided in the column 'provide details' in the Equalities Impact Assessment under the characteristic 'Pregnancy and Maternity (Appendix 4)

Recommendations (a) and (b) were considered by Cabinet on 12 October 2012 as part of the decision on **Tendering Strategy – Waste and Recycling Contract 2013.**

The **Issue for Decision** was to consider the tendering strategy for the new waste and recycling contract, together with proposals for street cleansing due to start in August 2013 and approval to commit to a joint procurement with Ashford and Swale Borough Councils.

Included in the decision made was the following response: That the responses to the Scrutiny Committee Recommendation action and Implementation Plan (SCRAIP), as attached at Appendix A, be agreed.

Thank you

The Committee considered evidence from a variety of stakeholders and would like to thank the following individuals and organisations who have personally contributed to this review:

Closed Loop

Nick Cliffe, Marketing Manager

Aylesford Newsprint

Gemma Barratt, Head of Recycling

Amanda Manning, Recycling Administrator

Maidstone Prison (Recycling Unit)

Ian Brightman, Recycling Manager

NOAH Enterprise

Jim O'Connor, Chief Executive

Steve McGill, Director

Kent County Council

Peter Horn, Waste Operations Manager

Maidstone Borough Council

Steve Goulette, Assistant Director of Environment and Regulatory Services

Jennifer Gosling, Waste Manager

Kent Waste Partnership

Paul Vanston, Kent Waste Partnership Manager

The Committee would also like to thank the members of the public who took the time to offer their opinions and ideas on the Freighter service and Bulky Collection.

**This report is available in alternative formats.
For further information about this service please
contact the Scrutiny Section on 01622 602524.**

**The report is also available on the Council's
website:**

www.maidstone.gov.uk/osc

ⁱ Tetra pack is a multinational food processing and packaging company of Swedish origin. Tetra Pack's first product was a paper carton used for storing and transporting milk. The first product was a package in the shape of a triangular pyramid, called the Tetra Classic.

ⁱⁱ www.wrap.org.uk