

Communities, Housing and Environment Committee

16 February 2016

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

Yes

Mitigation for Withdrawal of Saturday Freighter Service

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

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:-

That the Committee approves the proposed mitigation measures for the removal of the Saturday Freighter Service

This report relates to the following corporate priorities:

- Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all – the mitigation for the removal of the Saturday Freighter Service will ensure that residents are able to deal with their waste responsibly and will promote recycling.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Community, Housing and Environment Committee	16 February 2016

Mitigation for Withdrawal of Saturday Freighter Service

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Report of the Head of Finance and Resources for the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2016/17 Onwards – Final Review set out the proposal to generate £40,000 savings from the withdrawal of the Saturday Freighter Service.
 - 1.2 This Committee requested further information regarding measures to mitigate the withdrawal of this service, which this report outlines.
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2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Weekend Freighter Service was originally introduced in 1991, predating the introduction of wheeled bins and mainstream recycling. The purpose of the service was to enable residents to dispose of any form of waste including bulky items.
- 2.2 Over the past 10 years the Service has been reviewed and adapted to reflect the changing needs of the Borough and improve efficiency of the Service. Monitoring of the Service during this time has shown a steady decline in usage and due to increased emphasis on recycling within the Borough, the items which can be disposed of through this route have also been restricted. This is outlined in Appendix A.
- 2.3 The service now consists of a single Saturday freighter which visits 99 sites across the Borough every 10 weeks and collects bulky items and general home de-cluttering waste, such as old furniture, children's toys and DIY waste.
- 2.4 The Saturday Freighter Service currently costs £45,000 per annum and in 2014/15 collected approximately 300 tonnes of waste, which was sent to landfill as it could not be separated for recycling. This tonnage has a negative impact of 0.27% on the Council's recycling rate.
- 2.5 It is noted that there is an inequality of service across the Borough through the provision of the Saturday Freighter Service, with only those living in close proximity or with transport being able to use it. A recent survey with householders living near a freighter site and those living away from a site, indicated a declining use of the service and supported the results from the monitoring in 2014. This confirms that small pockets of residents are benefiting from a service which is paid for by all taxpayers. The results of the survey are shown in Appendix B.
- 2.6 The Council also offers a Bulky Collection Service to residents to dispose of waste which does not fit in a wheeled bin. For this service there is a very reasonable charge of £23 for 1-4 items and £33 for 5-8 items, with charges scheduled to rise by just 50 pence in 2016/17. In 2014/15, there were approximately 4,350 bulky collections made.

- 2.7 The Bulky Collection Service costs £68,500 per annum and generates approximately £80,000 income per year. However as the number of bulky collections increases, the cost for the Service also increases. Any surplus generated contributes to other contract costs.
- 2.8 The Saturday Freighter Service currently provides an inequality of service to Maidstone residents as it enables abled-bodied people to dispose of bulky waste free of charge; however those who are unable to transport their waste would be required to pay for a bulky collection. Stage 1 of an Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out based on the planned changes and shows that the proposal removes these inequalities and the detrimental impact the current service has on some residents. The Equality Impact Assessment is included in Appendix C.
- 2.9 The Saturday Freighter Service has also been found to be used frequently by commercial businesses that are unable to access Tovil Household Waste Recycling Centre and would be required to travel to Sittingbourne to dispose of their waste responsibly.

Proposed Mitigation for Service Withdrawal

- 2.10 Monitoring has shown that people generally use the Freighter Service because it's free, it's convenient, they cannot use Tovil Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) or they do not want to use Tovil HWRC.
- 2.11 Whilst the Bulky Collection Service is undoubtedly more convenient as there is not a requirement to wait for up to 10 weeks and the items are collected from the resident's property, the issue of cost and use of the Tovil HWRC can be mitigated to some extent.
- 2.12 There is no evidence to suggest the Saturday Freighter Service is more frequently used by those on low incomes or that it reduces fly-tipping. Nonetheless, it is sensible for changes to be made to other services to ensure the withdrawal of the Service does not have a negative impact on low-income groups and/or the incidence of fly-tipping.
- 2.13 Firstly it is proposed that an annual subsidised Bulky Collection is offered to low income households in receipt of Council Tax Reduction Discount as a recognisable assessment of need. This subsidy would equate to the Service being offered once a year at cost i.e. £16 for 1-4 items.
- 2.14 It is recommended that a six month trial of the subsidy is carried out to determine usage and assess the benefit to residents and the Council.
- 2.15 By offering the subsidy at this level there will not be an impact on the cost of the Bulky Collection Service. It is also only proposed to offer one subsidised collection per year as evidence from a comparator local authority suggests that free or limitless collections are often misused. Appendix D shows the services offered by neighbouring authorities.
- 2.16 Effort is already being made to refer residents to furniture reuse and other charitable organisations where possible and greater emphasis will be placed

on this through the Bulky Collection booking process and through customer service advisors in the Gateway. The Council will also continue to work with charities to identify opportunities to divert more waste to reuse and recycling.

- 2.17 A significant concern for some years has been the level of commercial waste illegally disposed of through the Saturday Freighter Service. However without a facility locally, the nearest being in Sittingbourne, it is understandable why this route has proved popular with small businesses. Initial discussions have been held with the County Council about opportunities for accepting this waste at a facility in Maidstone. This could be a commercial opportunity for the Council, working in partnership with the County to access existing waste disposal routes.
- 2.18 In the meantime it is proposed that the Council publicise businesses' responsibilities and promote the Council's existing commercial waste service to SME's.
- 2.19 The Council will continue to work pro-actively with the County Council to see what improvements can be made at Tovil HWRC or elsewhere to improve the customer experience.
- 2.20 Overall a combination of introducing mitigation measures alongside ongoing education work around the importance and benefits of recycling would ensure that the withdrawal of the Saturday Freighter does not have an overall negative impact on communities and increases recycling rates within the Borough.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 **Option 1:** The Committee could chose to agree the mitigation measures as set out in this report. This will enable a more equitable access to the Service and promote higher levels of reuse and recycling, contributing to the Council's environmental objectives.
- 3.2 **Option 2:** The Committee could propose alternative mitigation measures or focus on specific measures such as signposting to existing reuse and recycling routes.
- 3.3 **Option 3:** The Committee could decide that no mitigation measures are required.

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 Option 1 is the preferred option as it reduces the potential impact of the Service withdrawal, whilst offering a low level of financial risk to the Council.
- 4.2 The proposed mitigation measures ensure that those who currently use the Saturday Freighter are provided with viable alternative routes to dispose of waste responsibly.

- 4.3 The introduction of a bulky collection subsidy would benefit all residents on a low income as opposed to just able-bodied residents who currently benefit from the Saturday Freighter Service.
- 4.4 Alternative mitigation measures are unlikely to deliver the level of saving required to balance the budget in 2016/17 or provide any additional benefits above those set out in this report and therefore are not recommended.

5. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 5.1 The Committee, at the January 2016 meeting, considered and agreed the proposal to withdraw the Saturday Freighter Service to generate a saving of £40,000 per annum, however requested that actions to mitigate the withdrawal of the Service are considered.

6. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 6.1 The Saturday Freighter Service will be withdrawn from the end of April 2016, following a full 10 week cycle. This will enable residents using the Service to be notified and notices to be displayed.
- 6.2 Information will also be published on the Council's website, through the customer contact centre and the Borough Update.
- 6.3 Promotion of bulky reuse and recycling schemes is already being carried out through roadshows and the Council's website.
- 6.4 The introduction of an annual subsidised bulky collection to residents in receipt of Council Tax Reduction Discount would start at the beginning of May 2016 if agreed. This will be reviewed after 6 months to determine its effectiveness.
- 6.5 Discussions are being held with the County Council to explore opportunities for accepting commercial waste at the Council's depot in Park Wood. The imminent installation of the weighbridge at this site will facilitate this proposal. In the meantime, the Council will ensure information is available to local businesses to ensure that they are aware of how to deal with their waste responsibly.

7. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all – the mitigation for the removal of	Head of Environment & Public

	the Saturday Freighter Service will ensure that residents are able to deal with their waste responsibly and will promote recycling.	Realm
Risk Management	<p>Failure to secure £40,000 saving from this service will pose a significant risk to the MTFS. This report identifies the mechanisms in place to support the withdrawal of the Saturday Freighter Service.</p> <p>Failure to meet the EU target of recycling 50% by 2020 is also likely to have a financial impact on the Council through issuing of fines. The withdrawal of the freighter service will help the Council to achieve 50% recycling through reducing the amount of waste disposed of.</p>	Head of Environment & Public Realm
Financial	The Council's medium term financial strategy requires the identification of £2.4m in savings and efficiency to maintain a balanced budget for 2016/17. Each service committee has made such savings and efficiencies and this Committee has contributed £98,000 (4%) to the delivery of that target. The removal of the freighter service represents £40,000 of that contribution.	Head of Finance & Resources
Staffing	None identified	Head of Environment & Public Realm
Legal	The Council does not have a statutory obligation to provide this service.	Head of Environment & Public Realm
Equality Impact Needs Assessment	Stage 1 of the process has been completed and has not identified any potential impacts. However it has been identified that the current Service provides some inequality as not all residents, particularly the elderly and disabled will be able	Policy & Information Manager

	to access the Service.	
Environmental/Sustainable Development	The withdrawal of this Service will have a positive effect of around 0.2% on the Borough's recycling rate and supports the Council's Waste Strategy.	Head of Environment & Public Realm
Community Safety	None identified	Head of Environment & Public Realm
Human Rights Act	None identified	Head of Environment & Public Realm
Procurement	None identified	Head of Environment & Public Realm
Asset Management	None identified	Head of Environment & Public Realm

8. REPORT APPENDICES

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

- Appendix A: Weekend Freighter Service - Comparison of Data 2005-2014
- Appendix B: Saturday Freighter Service – Survey Results 2016
- Appendix C: Equality Impact Assessment
- Appendix D: Neighbouring Bulky Collection Services

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None