

Communities, Housing and Environment Committee

18 July 2017

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

Yes

Review of Waste Strategy 2014-2019

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

This report makes the following recommendations to the final decision-maker:

1. That the Committee notes the progress made so far against the objectives set out in the Waste Strategy 2014 – 2019 (Appendix A).
2. Agrees that the current Waste Strategy 2014 - 2019 no longer delivers the Council's ambition for its Waste and Recycling Services and that a new Waste Strategy for 2018 – 2023 should be prepared and presented to the Committee by April 2018.
3. That a workshop is held in September with Members of the Communities, Housing and Environment Committee to shape the new Strategy and determine the level of ambition, investment and appetite for bold service changes.

This report relates to the following corporate priorities:

- Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all – the strategy supports the management of waste in a sustainable and environmentally sensitive manner

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Communities, Housing and Environment Committee	20 July 2017

Review of Waste Strategy 2014-19

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 In 2014, the Council adopted its second 5 year waste strategy with the objective to provide services which focus on waste reduction, reuse and recycling, following the principles of the waste hierarchy.
 - 1.2 The purpose of this report is to review the progress against the objectives set out in the current Waste Strategy over the past 12 months (Appendix A) and provide an update on the action plan. The report also sets out a proposal to identify the level of ambition and investment the Committee wishes to see for the Service and future Waste Strategy.
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2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Council first adopted a 5 year waste strategy in 2010 in order to provide a focused and target driven approach to managing waste in Maidstone. At the time the Council's recycling rate had reached 34% through a slow, progressive increase in recycling services and the Council was starting discussions to consider a partnership collection contract for the delivery of waste and recycling services.
- 2.2 The Strategy intended to act as a step change for the Council's waste and recycling services, setting out some extremely challenging targets and bold decisions including the introduction of weekly food waste collections and fortnightly refuse collections.
- 2.3 The success of this Waste Strategy exceeded all expectations, predominantly driven by the implementation of major service changes. The recycling rate reached 50% by 2014, a year ahead of schedule, the total waste declined by 11% and 80% of households participated in the weekly food waste service.
- 2.4 The implementation of the Mid Kent Joint Waste Contract in 2013 also supported the success of the Strategy, with the introduction of glass recycling into the existing mixed recycling service, as well as reducing the cost to the Council by over £1 million per year.
- 2.5 The successful delivery of this Waste Strategy resulted in a new 5 year strategy being adopted in 2014 which aimed to replicate the ambitious objectives, however without identifying any significant service changes. This, as well as national trends, has resulted in a very different outcome for the Strategy.
- 2.6 Last year the Strategy was reviewed and the recycling rate objective was reduced from 60% to 55% by 2019. This was due to the recycling rate plateauing and showing some indication of decline. The review highlighted that contamination posed a significant risk to recycling success and therefore a target of below 8% was introduced to the Strategy. However the review did not

propose to change the direction of the Strategy or its objectives, or set out any significant service changes.

2.7 Over the past 12 months there has been a focus on engagement and behavioural change, predominately targeted at the food waste collection and the waste generated from properties with communal collection points, specifically flats. A brief summary of the activities are shown below.

2.8 **The Big Maidstone Food Waste Challenge Incentive Scheme** – The Council was successfully awarded funding from the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) to offer a residents' incentive scheme to encourage and reward use of the weekly food collection service. The uptake of this has been fairly slow despite incentives including shopping vouchers and free swims at the Leisure Centre. It has however continued to maintain a small amount of interest with 550 people registered and 2 further prize draws scheduled for August and November 2017.

Following feedback from other Councils who participated in the scheme, advice was provided by DCLG that the incentive schemes should focus on comprehensive communications. This funding has therefore driven a number of initiatives including school theatre workshops, roadshows, leaflets and advertising as well as offering the incentives.

2.9 **Design a Bus Advert Competition** - The aim of this was to engage with children on the topic of food recycling and encourage them to reflect on why they felt it was important. Assemblies and workshops were also carried out in some primary schools to increase awareness and knowledge of recycling.

2.10 **Kent-wide Communications** – the Council worked with the Kent Resource Partnership to deliver Kent-wide messages about food recycling including placing “No Food Waste Stickers” on refuse bins and delivering the Informational Leaflets detailed below. This was in addition to supporting ongoing national campaigns with Keep Britain Tidy.

2.11 **Informational Leaflet** – a new recycling leaflet was designed and delivered to all households. It had been designed to improve awareness of the waste services provided whilst educating and reminding residents about the benefits of recycling and items which can be recycled.

2.12 **Creation of Short Video** – the animated Caddy Family was created along with a short video for use on social media and as part of the school's event programme. This was used to help appeal to a wider audience with bite-size information and on social media. The characters were also used as part of the theatre workshop which visited local primary schools.

2.13 **Engagement Events** – the following have been carried by the team over the last 12 months:-

- Visited 12 primary schools with the Caddy Family as part of the food recycling promotion funded by DCLG.

- Set up roadshows across the Borough, with 9 dates at: Morrison's, Tesco Grove Green, Waitrose Allington, Jubilee Square and Sainsbury's Town Centre, to promote food recycling with give-aways such as: "Love Food" Kits, caddy liners, recipes, badges etc – funded by the DCLG grant.
- Various school and village fetes, community groups and seasonal events promoting recycling – including Mote Park Fun Day, Staplehurst, Ulcombe, Senacre Wood, South Borough Primary, local scout groups, Christmas and Halloween events in Town Centre

2.14 A key focus of this Strategy is increasing the capture of good quality recycling from the 10% of Maidstone properties that have communal collections. Previous research identified that the unlimited refuse capacity in flats results in poor quality, low levels of recycling and high quantities of rubbish, which has a significant impact on the overall recycling rate for the Borough.

2.15 Over the past couple of years, the number of refuse bins in each block have been reviewed and are now limited to 140 litre capacity per flat. Weekly food waste collections have been introduced where possible along with the provision of recycling bins. This ensures those living in flats have an equal service to those within their own wheeled bins.

2.16 In the past 12 months, a robust enforcement process has been put in place and is used to tackle communal collections where waste is accumulating and the recycling bins are not being used. Where needed, residents, managing agents and housing trusts are being issued with formal Section 46 Notices which dictate how the waste should be presented for collection and then Community Protection Warnings and Notices are issued where there is ongoing failure to comply. This approach has been very successful with 51 Notices issued and all are now taking actions to address the issues and improve resident engagement.

2.17 This year has also seen the benefit of the street arising recycling which was introduced in May 2016. The grit, sand, detritus and low levels of litter swept from the highway are now sent to a facility in Sussex for recycling and was anticipated to boost the Borough's recycling rate by 1-2%.

Progress Update

2.18 The past 12 months has seen some improvements in performance compared with the previous year. There has been an increase in the Borough's recycling rate from 47.79% to 49.9%, a reduction of 6kg per household in the total waste produced and the contamination rate reducing by just over 1%.

2.19 Both in the national and local context, this performance has been good, with many authorities particularly high performers seeing a reduction in recycling rates and increase in waste growth. The main reasons for this appears to be the light-weighting of packaging, where packaging producers use less plastic in their products to reduce costs, an improving financial climate and growing public apathy. In Maidstone specifically, it has also been identified that the enhanced recycling collections have created "spare" capacity in refuse bins which in some

cases is being used for garden waste or DIY waste, which should not be disposed of in this way.

2.20 There is no doubt that the communications campaign has contributed to the increasing recycling rate, specifically the “No food waste stickers” on the refuse bins which saw a 28% increase in the amount of food waste recycled in the following month.

2.21 However it is clear that the engagement work has had limited success at driving positive performance beyond that achieved in previous years. Without significant service changes, it is unlikely that engagement alone will have a step change in performance needed to achieve the targets set out in the Waste Strategy.

2.22 The current performance for each of the objectives in the Waste Strategy is shown below:

	2015/16	2016/17	Trend	Target
Objective 1: <i>To maintain low levels of total household waste and recycling at the level achieved in 2011/12 of 813kg per household</i>	845kg	839kg	Positive	813kg
Objective 2: <i>To increase the amount of household waste sent for recycling, reuse or composting to 55% by 2019</i>	47%	50%	Positive	55%
Objective 3: <i>To achieve zero waste to landfill by 2015/16</i>	0.3%	1.56%	Negative	0%
Objective 4: <i>To maintain the value for money of the waste collection service and achieve a cost per household below £40 per year</i>	£35.07	£32.68	Positive	£40
Objective 5: <i>To improve residents' satisfaction with Maidstone Borough Council's waste and recycling services</i>	82%	To be completed in October 2017	Positive	82%
Objective 6: <i>To achieve a contamination rate of 8% or lower</i>	9.9%	8.8%	Positive	8%

<p>Objective 7: <i>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</i></p>	<p>No specific data</p>	<p>No specific data</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>N/A</p>
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- 2.23 Overall the results above show positive trends compared to the previous year, however are significantly below the targets within the Strategy. The table shows that only 2 of the 6 measurable indicators are on track to be delivered.
- 2.24 However it is particularly important to highlight objective 4 which relates to the value for money of the services. Although the recycling performance has been lower than expected, the cost per household is at an all-time low and 18% below the original target. Given the reducing investment in the service, the performance should be considered to be good. This is further supported by the Bi-Annual Residents Survey that has maintained a satisfaction rate of 82%. Although this overall figure has remained the same, it should be noted that there has been a 2% increase from "Fairly Satisfied" to "Very Satisfied."
- 2.25 The recycling rate has recovered the 3% decrease in 2015/16, predominately due to the recycling of street arisings, the withdrawal of the Saturday Freighter and the increase in food waste recycling following the comprehensive communications campaign.
- 2.26 The only negative trend is the percentage of waste sent to landfill. Although there was a small increase in the percentage of waste sent to landfill, this is still an exceptionally low amount and when introduced, the target of zero waste to landfill was considered aspirational. The small increase is largely due to the bottom ash produced by the Energy from Waste facility and a small amount of bulky waste which could not be sent for recovery into energy.

Future Waste Strategy

- 2.27 Whilst the performance has been positive, it has not delivered what the Waste Strategy intended and without substantial service changes, it is unlikely that the targets will be achieved by 2019/20. This is likely to require significant investment along with bold decisions to limit the amount of waste which can be thrown away and encourage residents to recycle more.
- 2.28 Therefore it would not be advisable to continue with this Strategy with targets which are purely aspirational.

- 2.29 It is recommended that a new Waste Strategy for 2018 – 2023 is prepared and presented to the Communities, Housing and Environment Committee for approval by April 2018.
- 2.30 In order to achieve this it is also recommended that a workshop is held in September with Members of the Communities, Housing and Environment Committee to shape the new Strategy and determine the level of ambition, investment and appetite for bold service changes.
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3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 The Committee could agree that a new Waste Strategy is needed to reflect the current ambition of the Council and therefore make the decision to support the delivery of a workshop with Committee Members.
- 3.2 Alternatively the Committee could determine that the Council no longer needs a 5 year waste strategy.
- 3.3 The final option that the Committee could consider is to retain the current waste strategy and pursue the existing objectives through continued engagement with residents and within current resources.
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4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 It is recommended that the Committee agree that a new 5 year waste strategy is prepared and that a workshop is held with Members of the Committee to shape the new Strategy and determine the level of ambition, investment and appetite for bold service changes. The reason for this is that the objectives set out in the current Waste Strategy are considered to be undeliverable without a significant service change. However this will require bold decisions and an ambition vision for the services. Therefore it is important for the Committee to have the opportunity to discuss their appetite for ongoing challenging targets or whether the current performance, which is above the national and EU targets should be maintained.
- 4.2 Whilst the current Strategy is no longer considered deliverable, it is not proposed that the Council should no longer have a Waste Strategy. Having a waste strategy ensures any future decisions are aligned with the Council's vision and objectives for the Services. Without such a strategy there is a risk that decisions could be made piecemeal and without a clear direction, which could elevate the overall cost of the service and impact the viability of the service to be retendered in 2023.
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5. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 5.1 There have not been any public consultations regarding the Services since the first Waste Strategy was adopted and significant service changes were

introduced, However the Services receive a high level of customer satisfaction through the bi-annual Place survey and historically have maintained high satisfaction despite some significant services changes.

- 5.2 Feedback from the Budget Consultation carried out in 2016 in preparation for the Medium Term Financial Strategy, highlighted that the Service was considered to be a priority for the Public however was not identified as an area for investment, with some suggestions that further savings could be found in this area.
- 5.3 Within the recommendations it is proposed to hold a workshop with Members of the Committee in order to understand their vision for the Service and future Strategy.

6. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 6.1 Following the decision by the Committee, further work will be required to prepare a strategy which reflects the vision and ambition of the Council. This will include consultation with key stakeholders and partner organisations.
- 6.2 It is proposed to hold the workshop with Members in September and further engagement with both Members and key stakeholders and partners may be required.

7. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all – the proposals support this priority by continuing to encourage and support responsible waste disposal and reuse and recycling.	Head of Environment and Public Realm
Risk Management	<p>Failure to communicate how to use the service could result in residents not engaging and not manage their waste correctly.</p> <p>Failure to meet the EU target of 50% recycling of household waste by 2020 may result in financial penalties.</p> <p>Recycling performance will continue to be monitored monthly to determine the effectiveness of the actions.</p>	Head of Environment and Public Realm

Financial	The Council's expenditure budgets for waste collection and recycling amount to around £3 million per annum. The proposed member workshop is critical in defining the various options for the future. The costs and benefits of all options will need to be considered before any choice is made about future strategy.	S 151 Officer and Finance Manager
Staffing		
Legal	None identified. The Council does have a statutory duty to provide a household waste collection service and any proposed waste strategy will ensure that this duty is met.	Interim Deputy Head of Legal Partnership
Equality Impact Needs Assessment	None at this time – There is no proposal to change the services provided at this stage. However, an EqlA will be carried out as part of the development of a new Strategy.	Equalities and Corporate Policy Officer
Environmental/Sustainable Development	The Waste Strategy and proposed Action Plan offer the most sustainable service to Maidstone tax payers and focus on reducing the Council's impact on the environment through waste prevention, minimisation, reuse and recycling.	Head of Environment and Public Realm
Community Safety	None	
Human Rights Act	None	
Procurement	None	
Asset Management	None	

8. REPORT APPENDICES

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

- Appendix A – Waste Strategy 2014 – 2019
- Appendix B – Maidstone Borough Council Recycling Rate
- Appendix C – Maidstone Borough Council Total Waste Arisings

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Waste Strategy 2010 - 2015