

Waste Services Update

Final Decision-Maker	Communities, Housing and Environment Committee
Lead Head of Service	William Cornall, Director of Regeneration and Place
Lead Officer and Report Author	Jennifer Shepherd, Head of Environment and Public Realm Graham Gosden, Waste Manager
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

Executive Summary

The Mid Kent Waste Contract has been operational since 2013, however in late 2019 experienced notable service failures due to problems with vehicle reliability and access issues. This report outlines the work undertaken to improve performance over the past few months as well as a revised document offering guidance to developers to ensure waste provision is given more consideration in the future.

Purpose of Report

For noting.

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. That improvement in performance of the waste collection contract be noted; and
2. That the revised waste information for developers be noted.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Corporate Leadership Team	Tuesday 3 March 2020
Communities, Housing and Environment Committee	Tuesday 30 June 2020

Waste Services Update

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	<p>The report highlights the contractor’s performance levels in relation to services provided across the borough. These services play an important role in supporting the Safe, Clean and Green aims.</p> <p>The reworded guidance on waste collection reinforces the alternate weekly collection system and provides improved guidance for the location and construction of communal bin stores. This takes into account a trend for flats to have more bedrooms, therefore more occupants leading to more waste. The guidance should lead to improved access for our contractor. The guidance supports the Councils clean and green aims with the better conditions encouraging recycling.</p>	Waste Manager
Cross Cutting Objectives	Services include the collection of recycling and garden waste from properties. These materials are recycled and substantially reduce the environmental impact of waste collection, so supporting the aims of Environmental Sustainability.	Waste Manager
Risk Management	This report is for noting only. No new risks have been identified relating to the performance of the waste contract for the remaining 3 and a half years of the contract term.	Head of Environment and Public Realm
Financial	The proposals set out in the recommendation are all within already approved budgetary headings, no additional funding required.	Maxine Mahon – no issues
Staffing	No staffing implications within this report.	[Head of Service]
Legal	The continued contract monitoring and improved guidance will support the Council’s duties to provide a regular domestic waste collection services, as required under Environmental Protection Act 1990 Sec 45.	Robin Harris – no issues

Privacy and Data Protection	No additional implications identified	Equalities and Corporate Policy Officer
Equalities	The contract allows for service standards to be adjusted to reflect equalities needs. Maintaining the standards of assisted collections is key to providing the service to some of our more vulnerable residents. No changes are proposed.	Equalities and Corporate Policy Officer
Public Health	Regular waste collection is a prerequisite to maintaining public health. The continued monitoring of the contract will help to maintain service standards and promote good health within the local population.	Waste Manager Paul Clarke – no issues
Crime and Disorder	No impact identified	Waste Manager
Procurement	No impact identified	Waste Manager

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In 2013, the Council entered into partnership with Ashford and Swale Borough Councils as well as Kent County Council to let a 10-year contract for the collection of household waste and for some street cleansing services to Biffa Municipal Ltd.
- 2.2 This contract delivers all of Maidstone's frontline waste collection services including:
- Refuse collection (£1 million)
 - Mixed recycling collection (£900k)
 - Food waste (£500k)
 - Garden waste (£300k)
 - Bulky waste (£100k)
 - Clinical waste (£10k)
 - Textiles and WEEE (waste electrical and electronic equipment)

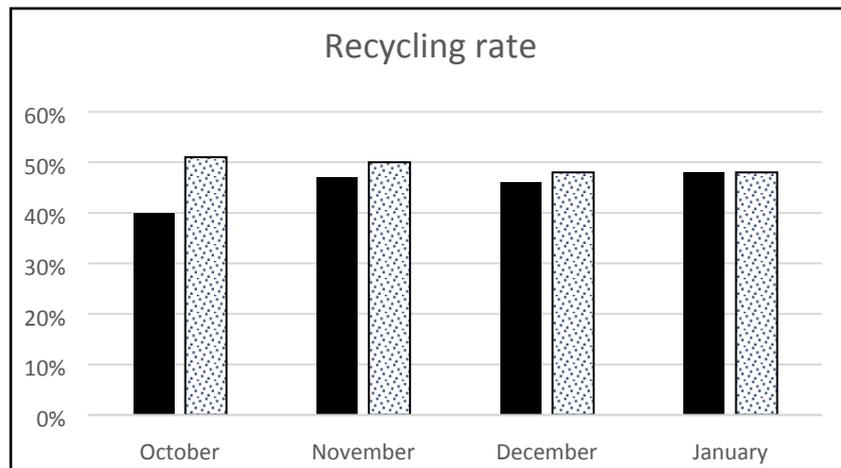
The approximate cost is shown against each service.

- 2.3 The Mid Kent Waste Contract has delivered over £1million in savings per year for Maidstone with the cost of the service falling to around £34 per household. The contract currently costs the Council £2.8 million per year which is funded from Council Tax, support from Kent County Council and external income such as garden waste subscriptions.

- 2.4 Waste and recycling collection is a primary public service, provided to every domestic household every week. Standards of service impact regularly on every resident. Therefore, any reduction in standards will directly affect the wider public perception of the authority.
- 2.5 Last Autumn/Winter (Nov 2019), there were considerable service issues, primarily caused by continual vehicle breakdowns. This caused delays in areas across the Borough in collecting waste or recycling from properties. This also resulted in an increase in collection issues. The contractor was required to operate a catch-up service on most weekends over this period. MBC officers utilised the performance mechanism within the contract as well as working closely with the contractor's local management team, to resolve the issues and provide updates to residents.
- 2.6 In addition to vehicle maintenance problems, there were a high number of problems gaining access into issues roads due to parked cars, particularly on corners and at junctions. This resulted in the contractor having to repeatedly reattempt collections, putting a further strain on the resources available.
- 2.7 During late November there were changes to the contractor's management team, with the new manager initiating a number of actions to improve performance and resolve the high vehicle downtime. Officers worked with the company in improving the standards of service. The main aim being to ensure we were suitably prepared to operate over the busy Christmas and New Year period. Officers continued to utilise the performance default mechanism where appropriate.
- 2.8 In December the Council issued a statement to apologise to residents for the disruption to service over the previous couple of months. This was widely reported on social media and resulted with an interview on radio Kent.
- 2.9 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with a summary of progress over the recent months, to highlight measures of performance from October to January/February. Information has also been included on headline recycling performance on a month by month basis and a running average for the year.
- 2.10 For Members information key Environmental and service performance data is included as follows:

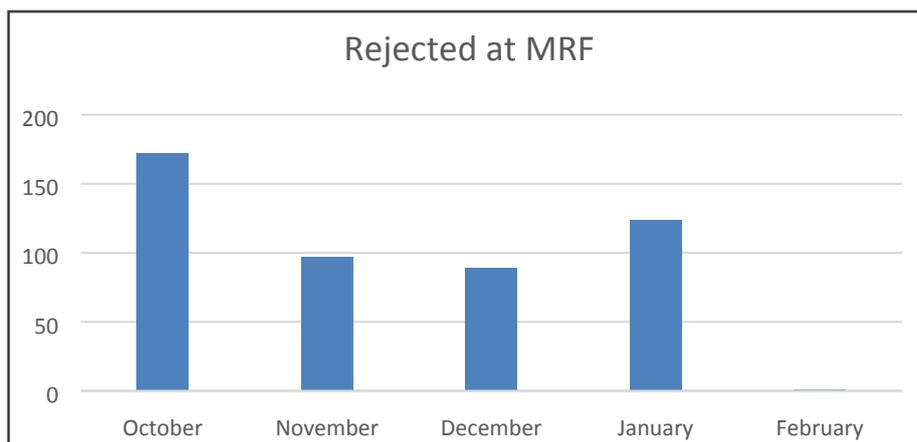
Environmental Performance

- 2.11 The recycling rate is running at nearly 50% for the current financial year. Members will note a dip in monthly performance over the winter (indicated by solid bar), this is usual seasonal variation due to the reduction in the amount of garden waste collected. This is expected to recover during February/March.



Solid bar – monthly figure
Dotted bar – annual running total

2.12 The decrease over this period has been slightly exaggerated due to contamination of the dry mix recycling, which is discussed below.

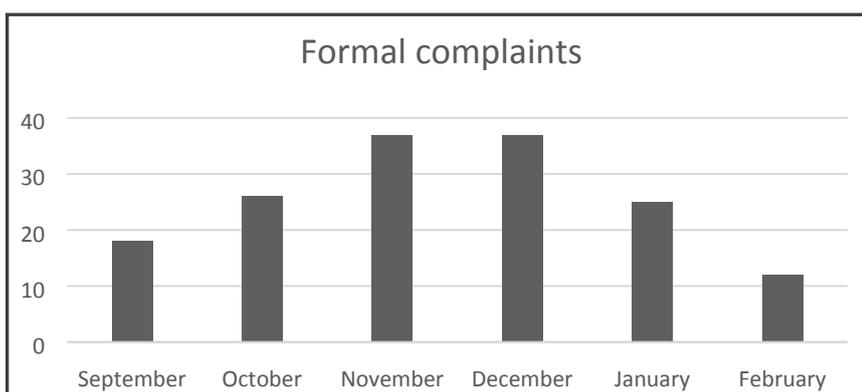


2.13 This is material which has been collected from residents and delivered to the sorting contractor. On delivery the load has failed to meet the required input specification and is therefore rejected and is disposed of as waste.

2.14 Reducing contamination of dry mix recycling is a partnership, even country wide issue.

2.15 The collection system in Maidstone has operated reasonably well for a number of years. In some cases, contamination is nearly a deliberate act, in other cases it's down to a lack of information. This will be addressed by a communications push on improving recycling quality, and extra crew training allowing them to reject contaminated bins at the kerbside.

Standard of service performance



- 2.16 To clarify, these are formal complaints logged by Complaint/FOI team, which are reported to waste department for further attention and written response.
- 2.17 Not all complaints relate to service standards, they can be about the cost of services, Christmas round changes or even the method of collection provided. The number recorded is a measure of public view of service standards.
- 2.18 In addition to these records the contract includes a formal performance mechanism, used to notify the contractor of service issues, these notices fall into three brackets and described as follows:

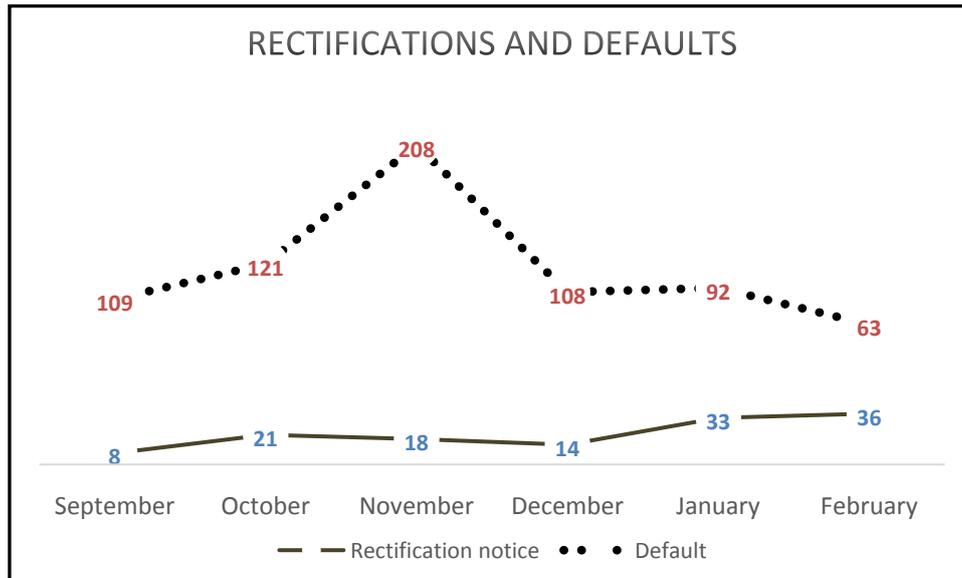
Rectification notices – would be used to formally advise the contractor of a service issue that he is not aware of.

Default notice – would be used when he has failed to respond to the rectification within required timeframe.

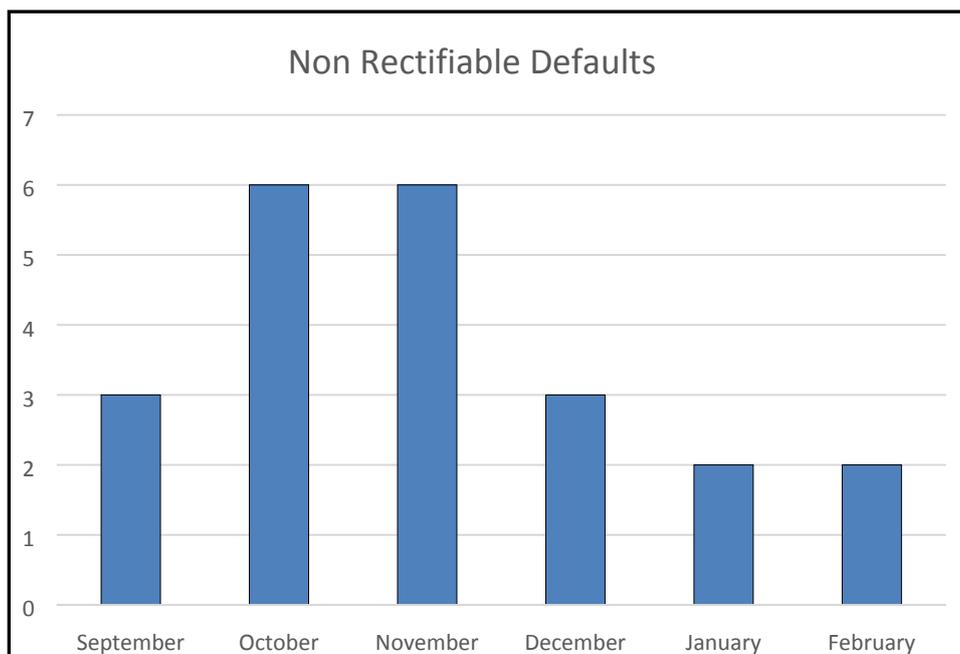
Non rectifiable default notice – used for the failure to remedy a default notice, or other serious failure event.

- 2.19 The data for the period is summarised in table 1.

	Rectification notice	Default	Non rectifiable default
September	8	109	3
October	21	121	6
November	18	208	6
December	14	108	3
January	33	92	2
February	36	63	2



- 2.21 The graph demonstrates a steep rise defaults during the Autumn peaking in mid-November, then settling over December / January. This indicates that during November the contractor was unable to keep up with the service issues notified but has over December and January got that situation under control.
- 2.22 There is a slight rise in rectification notices over this time, this is where issues are noted by Officers during inspections or the public have advised Waste Services of problems direct, without going through the call centre.



- 2.23 Non rectifiable defaults have also peaked in November and tailed back to a reasonable. This again shows where the contractor struggled to keep up with client demands during October/November.
- 2.24 This is a very blunt measure but does tend to show improvement recently.

Going Forward

- 2.25 Officers take the opportunity to highlight actions taken by the contractor over the recent months.
- 2.26 They have raised the importance of vehicle maintenance to Director level at the Contractor, involving their local managers in those conversations and placing a higher demand on their contractor. To date this has improved vehicle resilience.
- 2.27 They have provided completely new management at Maidstone. A new Operations Manager – responsible for day to day scheduling, staff issues, and a new Business Manager – responsible for overall financial control and external contractual issues, have been introduced.
- 2.28 In addition, across the whole partnership (which includes Swale and Ashford Councils) we have a new General Manager and the contract is being overseen in more detail at Company Director level.
- 2.29 These changes confirm a complete management revamp over the last five months. Fundamental service issues being raised by the client Councils are being considered and actioned at a much higher level within the Contractors organisation.

Development Waste Guidance

- 2.30 Waste Services provide a guidance document for local developers. This does not form a formal part of planning consent which is agreed to local and national standards, the guidance helps developers design the property to suit local waste collection services.
- 2.31 A number of conversions or developments have recently been found with insufficient space for our standard waste and recycling services. In some cases, the lack of space has resulted in a restriction of our recycling collection services, in extreme cases we've had to increase collection frequency and/or change the methodology of collection. In the light of these the guidance has been reviewed.
- 2.32 The revised guidance document looks to provide more explicit advice to developers about the existing requirements to deliver successful waste and recycling collection services to residents. The guidance has not substantially changed but looks to improve uniformity in the waste and recycling provision in new developments by offering clear expectations on the requirements for the service.
- 2.33 The attached document has increased the size of the bin stores, improved ventilation, lighting and clarified suitable locations for both collection staff

and residents. Importantly the guidance seeks to improve crew access by insisting on a standard type key arrangement, rather than each having to carry a lot of different keys.

- 2.34 The revised document also acknowledges that over time occupation rates for flats have increased. They are now regularly built as two or even three-bedroom units. The additional living accommodation results in additional residents and therefore additional waste. The revised calculation acknowledges changes and increases the allowance per property, to mirror that for regular houses.
- 2.35 The updated guidance is attached at Appendix 1.
- 2.36 It is intended that this guidance is used as the foundation for future discussions with Planning to introduce statutory planning requirements for the waste management of new developments.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 There are no matters for decision in this report. The Committee is asked to note the contents but may choose to take further action depending on the matters reported here.

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 In considering the action taken to improve performance following the period of disruption as well as the revised guidance for new developments, it is recommended that the Committee note the information.
- 4.2 Current performance has significantly improved, and the contract continues to deliver significant savings to the Kent Taxpayer. It is therefore not recommended that any further action is taken about the delivery of the current contract, but the information is used to inform the future contract post 2023.
- 4.3 A further report will be brought to the Committee next month outlining the next steps for consideration regarding the retendering the Mid Kent Waste Contract including initial findings from a recent modelling exercise of potential costings for alternative delivery models.

5. RISK

- 5.1 This report is presented for information only and has no direct risk management implications.
- 5.2 The Council continues to monitor the performance of the waste contractor and where appropriate uses the Performance Mechanism to recover costs.
-

6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 6.1 In February 2019, a report was presented to the Committee on performance at the mid-point of the 10-year contract. This report seeks to update the Committee on progress following a period of disruption.
- 6.2 Customer satisfaction with the service is measured through the biannual residents' survey and historically has shown high satisfaction with the services offered.
-

7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 7.1 The waste team will continue to monitor the contract and take appropriate steps to manage contractor performance. In addition, during the coming year they will take steps to promote recycling participation, reduce contamination and therefore maintain the overall recycling rate.
- 7.2 The revised waste guidance will be posted online on the Councils web site and made available to developers through the Council's planning team.
-

8. REPORT APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Developers Guidance for Waste Services

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

N/A