

# Housing, Health and Environment Policy Advisory Committee

**Tuesday 16  
January 2024**

## Provision of Wheeled Bins

<b>Timetable</b>	
<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
Housing, Health and Environment Policy Advisory Committee	Tuesday 16 January 2024
Cabinet	Wednesday 24 January 2024

<b>Will this be a Key Decision?</b>	Yes
<b>Urgency</b>	Not Applicable
<b>Final Decision-Maker</b>	Cabinet
<b>Lead Head of Service</b>	William Cornall, Director of Regeneration and Place
<b>Lead Officer and Report Author</b>	Jennifer Stevens, Head of Environment and Public Realm
<b>Classification</b>	Public
<b>Wards affected</b>	All

### Executive Summary

In April 2023, the Council changed its policy for the replacement of wheeled bins. This report reviews the impact of this and the subsequent amendments to the policy.

This report presents the new policy for the provision of wheeled bins for approval by Cabinet.

### Purpose of Report

Recommendation to Cabinet

### This report asks the Committee to consider the following recommendation to the Cabinet:

1. That the lessons learnt from the policy change are noted.
2. That the new revised policy for the provision of replacement bins is approved.

# Provision of Wheeled Bins

## 1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
<b>Impact on Corporate Priorities</b>	<p>The four Strategic Plan objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure</li> <li>• Safe, Clean and Green</li> <li>• Homes and Communities</li> <li>• A Thriving Place</li> </ul> <p>Effective delivery of the waste and recycling service positively contributes to the Council's strategic objective for a <i>Safe, Clean and Green</i> Borough. This report outlines the actions that have been taken to ensure that the Bin Replacement Policy continues to support this objective, whilst recognising the significant financial impact this policy has on the Council's budget position.</p>	Head of Environment and Public Realm
<b>Cross Cutting Objectives</b>	<p>The four cross-cutting objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heritage is Respected</li> <li>• Health Inequalities are Addressed and Reduced</li> <li>• Deprivation and Social Mobility is Improved</li> <li>• Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability is respected</li> </ul> <p>Environmental sustainability has been a key consideration of the policy decisions, to reduce unnecessary wastage of resources, whilst promoting recycling</p>	Head of Environment and Public Realm
<b>Risk Management</b>	The risks are set out in Section 5.	Head of Environment and Public Realm
<b>Financial</b>	The change in policy regarding the withdrawal of the charges for replacement	Head of Finance

	broken bins is likely to create a £100k budget pressure. This pressure has been built into the 2024/25 budget. The budget is still subject to approval by Council in February as part of the budget setting process.	
<b>Staffing</b>	<p>Implementation of the Bin Replacement Policy has placed a considerable demand on the Waste Team, impacting their ability to deliver other actions including the proactive promotion of the recycling services to improve performance.</p> <p>Other departments such as Customer Services and the formal Complaints team have also had a considerable increase in workload.</p>	Head of Environment and Public Realm
<b>Legal</b>	By virtue of Section 46 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 the Council can specify the receptacles which must be used in order to present waste for collection and can decline to collect waste that is not presented as specified.	Team Leader, Contracts and Commissioning, MKLS
<b>Information Governance</b>	The recommendations do not impact personal information (as defined in UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018) the Council Processes.	Information Governance Team – either Anna, Georgia or Lauren to review and approve.
<b>Equalities</b>	We recognise the recommendations may have varying impacts on different communities within Maidstone. Therefore, we have completed a separate equalities impact assessment (Appendix 3).	Equalities & Communities Officer
<b>Public Health</b>	We recognise that the recommendations will not negatively impact on population health or that of individuals.	Senior Public Health Officer
<b>Crime and Disorder</b>	There are no implications to Crime and Disorder	Head of Environment and Public Realm
<b>Procurement</b>	There are no implications to Crime and Disorder	Head of Environment

		and Public Realm
<b>Biodiversity and Climate Change</b>	<p>The implications of this report on biodiversity and climate change have been considered and are;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are no implications on biodiversity and climate change.</li> </ul>	Biodiversity and Climate Change Officer

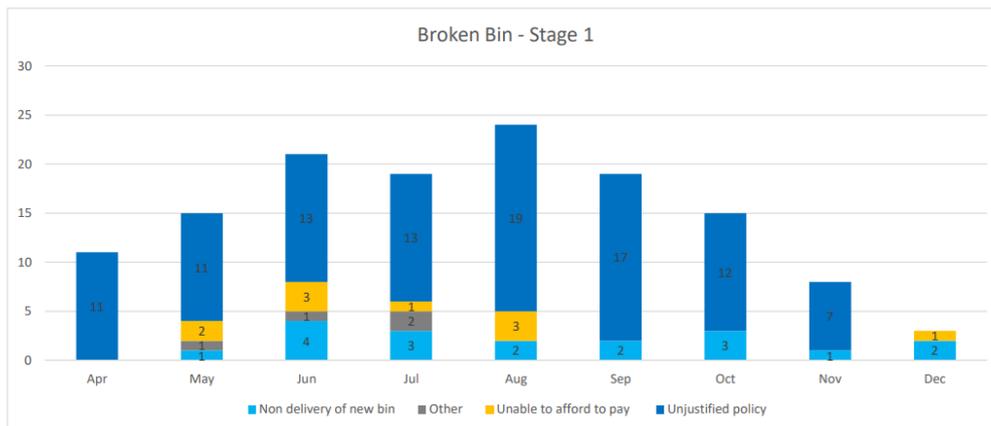
## 2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In 1999, Maidstone Borough Council introduced wheeled bins for the collection of residents' rubbish. Wheeled bins for recycling were then introduced in 2008 and food waste bins in 2011. The current annual replacement rate is approximately 12%, significantly higher than the 3% estimated within the contract. However, given wheeled bins have a life expectancy of 10+ years, the current replacement rate is not unrealistic.
- 2.2 Over the past 4 years, this has cost the Council, on average, £300k per year.
- 2.3 Several years ago, charges were introduced for the provision of bins to new build properties or for new occupiers of properties whereby the previous owner or tenant had removed the bins. For the latter of these, the provision of bins is standardly included in the property's fixture and fitting list, enabling residents to ensure that the bins are left at the property.
- 2.4 In 2022/23, this contributed £58k towards the cost of providing wheeled bins. Therefore, there remained a significant cost of over £220k per year to the Council of providing replacement bins.
- 2.5 Charging for all replacement bins was proposed as a savings option as part of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy. This was approved by the Council in February 2023 and implemented in April 2023.
- 2.6 This policy was in place for 24 weeks and during that time there was a 40% decrease in requests for replacement bins compared with the previous year. For the bins eligible for payment, 78% were paid and the remaining were provided free of charge. During this time, 106 complaints were received about the charges which equates to 7% of the bin replacement requests.
- 2.7 Following review of the data, feedback from customer services and consideration of the complaints received, the policy was updated to remove the charge for the replacement of bins which were reported as unserviceable by the collection crews. This was implemented from 25 September 2023 and is included in Appendix 1.
- 2.8 Over the past 11 weeks, there have been 584 requests for replacement refuse or recycling bins. This suggests a 12% reduction in requests for replacement refuse and recycling bins since the revised policy was

introduced in September 2023. However, the majority (83%) of bins provided were free of charge.

2.9 The payment rate for the replacement of missing bins remains at 76%.

2.10 The graph below shows the complaints data relating to the charging for replacement bins. The number of complaints peaked in August and have shown steady decline since and now in line with levels before the policy was first introduced.



2.11 An overall comparison on bin orders shows a 17% projected decrease in requests compared with 2022/23, which equates to an estimated £50,000 saving.

2.12 Overall, the withdrawal of the charges for replacement broken bins is likely to create a £100k budget pressure in 2024/25. This has been captured in the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

### **Lessons Learnt**

2.13 The original charging policy was introduced to help tackle budget pressures and generate a saving to support the Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy. Research had shown that the policy had been successfully implemented in neighbouring boroughs and in many locations across the UK.

2.14 However, it may be assumed that the age of Maidstone's bin stock, originally introduced in 1999, is the likely reason for the high replacement rate and therefore the charges had a bigger impact on residents.

2.15 Over the 24 years since Maidstone first introduced wheeled bins, there have been over 8 different bin suppliers which restricts the ability to carry out repairs i.e. the replacement of lids. The use of different manufacturers is largely outside of the Council's control, with the original supplier no longer in business and fluctuating demand significantly impacting lead-times. However, every effort should be made to limit future suppliers to enable replacement parts to be held in stock.

2.16 The impact of the charges is likely to have been felt more acutely due to the current financial pressures on householders and therefore greater

consideration should have been given when the policy was being developed to how those facing Poverty could be supported. Options for second-hand bins and subsidised rates were introduced in September, however this should have been considered earlier.

- 2.17 The revised policy, requiring the bin to be unserviceable before being replaced has continued to reduce the level of bin requests suggesting a reduction in the unnecessary replacement of bins with superficial damage or that are dirty.

---

### **3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS**

- 3.1 The review of the previous policy, impact of the revised policy and lessons learnt are for noting and then the Council could decide to take one of the following actions:
- 3.2 Option 1: Adopt the revised *Provision of Wheeled Bins Policy* (Appendix 2) which details when bins will be provided and where charges apply for both individual and communal properties.
- 3.3 Option 2: Retain the *Bin Charging Policy* issued in September 2023 (Appendix 1).
- 3.4 Option 3: Carry out a further review of the charges for the provision of wheeled bins and reconsider the application of charges for damaged bins.

---

### **4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 It is recommended that Option 1 is agreed, with the approval of the new *Provision of Wheeled Bins Policy*. With most replacement bins now being provided free of charge, this policy focuses on when and how bins will be provided, responsibilities of managing agents and what the charges for new bins will be.
- 4.2 Under this policy, charges will only apply to new build properties, new occupiers and when bins are stolen or lost. Bins that reach the end of their usable life – including where the lid is missing – will be replaced free of charge. Bins that go into the back of the collection vehicle will also be replaced by the Contractor, at their cost.
- 4.3 This policy also specifies the arrangements for bins at communal properties and the managing agents' responsibility to oversee the waste and recycling arrangements, tackle contamination or inappropriate usage of the bins and replace or repair damages bins – unless caused by the negligence of the crew.
- 4.4 Option 2 is not recommended as it has been identified that there are areas of ambiguity in the policy, specifically around missing lids and communal bins.

- 4.5 Option 3 is not recommended as the original charges for broken bins generated a significant number of complaints, became difficult to administer and put substantial pressure on several teams within the Council. Whilst the charges had a positive impact on the Council's budget and an overall reduction in the provision of bins, the negative impact outweighed this.
- 

## **5. RISK**

- 5.1 There are two significant risks to the Council relating to the provision of wheeled bins;
- 5.2 Reputational Risk – the waste and recycling service is provided to all households in the borough and therefore has one of the greatest impacts on the Council's reputation.
- 5.3 Over the course of the 24 weeks that the original charging policy was in place, there was significant criticism received both internally and externally about charging for broken bins. There was some press and social media coverage, however most negative comments were received via official complaints or correspondence with local councillors.
- 5.4 The revised policy addressed these concerns, and the level of complaints has decreased substantially as shown in the report.
- 5.5 Financial Risk – in 2022/23, the Council spent over £200k on the replacement of wheeled bins, £100k of this was not budgeted. The initial policy was designed to address this risk and generate a saving to the Council.
- 5.6 The revised policy poses a significant financial risk to the Council as the costs for replacement bins have risen steadily over the past few years with the increasing cost of plastics and contract costs. The requirement for the collection crew to report the bins as broken will reduce the number of unnecessary replacements and should mitigate some cost. However, £100k pressure has been identified in the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.
- 

## **6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK**

- 6.1 There has been significant discussion regarding the charging for replacement wheeled bins at Housing, Health and Environment Policy Advisory Committee and Council. The changes to the policy in September 2023 were supported, however a full review of the data was requested and for lessons learnt to be presented to the Housing, Health and Environment PAC.
- 

## **7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION**

7.1 No further communication is proposed if Option 1 is agreed as this is in line with the current practice. However, the new document will be circulated to internal teams to ensure that it is used consistently to respond to residents' enquiries.

---

## **8. REPORT APPENDICES**

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

- Appendix 1: Wheeled Bin Charging Policy – September 2023
  - Appendix 2: Provision of Wheeled Bins Policy – January 2024
  - Equality Impact Assessment
- 

## **9. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None