

Eastern Area Committee

Agenda Item 6

Meeting Date	Thursday 17 December 2020
Report Title	Waste and Street Cleansing – Future provision
Cabinet Member	Cllr Tim Valentine, Cabinet Member for Environment
Lead Officers	Alister Andrews and Kelly Upson
Head of Service	Martyn Cassell, Head of Commissioning, Environment and Leisure

Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

1. This report is to raise awareness that the current Mid Kent Waste Contract is due to end in October 2023 and therefore work has started on the preparation for the new contract. The Mid Kent partner authorities (Ashford, Maidstone and Swale) and a working group of Swale BC Members are exploring the future opportunities to deliver these services. One action from the working group was to raise awareness at the four Swale Area Committees to enable discussion around what factors are important to residents with regards to future waste collection and street cleansing.

Background

2. In 2013, Swale Borough Council entered into partnership with neighbouring authorities Ashford and Maidstone Borough Councils and Kent County Council to deliver a Mid Kent Waste Contract. This provided consistency of service across the three Boroughs, delivered significant cost savings and improved recycling rates.
3. Biffa Municipal Ltd are currently contracted to deliver waste collection services for the Mid Kent Waste Partnership. In Swale this includes general waste, recycling, garden waste, clinical collections, and bulky collections. Biffa also deliver the Street Cleansing functions for Swale and Ashford (at Maidstone street cleansing is delivered in house).
4. Street Cleansing includes the emptying of public litter bins, litter picking of streets and the collection of fly tipping on public land. It is an outcome-based contract which means that all streets are classified within one of four different 'zones' (zone 1 includes High Streets and zone 4 may include remote rural roads). These are continually monitored. The amount of litter is graded from A to D as per national guidelines. If cleanliness falls below the accepted standard for that zone, the contractors respond within a pre-determined timescale e.g. Grade D litter in zone 1 must be collected within 1 hour.

5. The end of the current waste contract offers the opportunity to consider a wide range of factors including alternatives to how recycling is collected and how the service is to be delivered.
6. The Mid Kent partnership currently has a fully 'co-mingled' collection, where all recycling is collected within a single wheeled bin. Kent County Council, as the disposal authority, prefer the 'twin-stream' collection method, whereby paper and cardboard are collected separately to the other recycling i.e. plastic bottles and tubs, glass, and cans. This system is currently operated in East and South West Kent. Such a system would require an additional container for Swale residents.
7. The government sets recycling targets for local authorities. By 2020 household recycling should be at 50%. The national level of performance sits at around 43%. At the time of writing this report the Swale 2020/21 YTD figure for recycling is approx 44%. The government has determined that recycling should be at 65% by 2035.
8. There are many operational and legislative factors to be considered. Calculating potential costs will be complex but overall we are expecting a price increase to retain a similar level of service to current standards. Any improvements to current standards will likely be at additional cost.
9. The council will be considering further engagement in the New Year in the form of a resident satisfaction survey to seek opinion on the current and future services.

Points for discussion

- a) Co-mingled collection is a straight-forward system and as such it costs less to collect the waste (one bin). However, costs are higher when it comes to sorting the recycling at the material recycling facility (MRF). The cost benefits of residents separating out this waste stream are yet to be finalised. In principle, would residents be willing to accept and store an additional container for paper and card and separate these materials prior to collection, or is this a potential barrier to recycling?
- b) Do Members/residents see air quality improvements such as the use of electric power on refuse freighters as money well spent? How does cleaner air and environmental improvements rate on the list of resident's priorities regarding the waste and street cleansing contract. Where does this topic rate in relation to other Swale priorities?
- c) By 2023, every house in England must be able to recycle food waste. The vast majority of houses in Swale already have this option. Campaigns have been undertaken to reduce the amount of food waste created and to increase the number of households in the Borough that separate food waste. What are the barriers to recycling food waste and what could the council do to encourage residents to recycle more food waste?
- d) Contamination in wheelie bins affects recycling figures and costs much more to dispose of. Food waste (including unwashed cans and glasses); garden waste;

textiles; black plastic bags and used nappies are all items that regularly get placed in the recycling incorrectly. Swale BC undertakes regular campaigns to promote correct recycling. What further measures can Swale BC undertake to reduce these contamination rates?

- e) With regards to the street cleansing contract, do Members/residents feel that the current levels of street cleansing are acceptable?