

**Extract from the Parish Chairmen's Meeting Notes
Tuesday 14 March 2017
held at the Town Hall, Tunbridge Wells**

Civic amenity vehicle service

Cllr Ronen Basu, the Portfolio-holder for Sustainability, summarised a progress report on the civic amenity vehicle service, which had been modified the previous summer. The full report had been circulated with the agenda.

Paul Shipley, the Contract Services Manager, provided further detail, adding that the garden waste collected by the service was making a good contribution to the Borough's recycling rates. He added that, based upon the progress being made, it was intended to: (i) continue unchanged; (ii) maintain the current level of effective communication with local councils; and (iii) await the outcome of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's task and finish group work on the future recycling and household waste contract.

Cllr Jukes advised that he had been in discussions with County Councillor Balfour, Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport, and the relevant KCC manager, seeking support for the provision of a household waste and recycling site to provide a service for the Eastern area of the Borough. He added that, as the Borough Council had no suitable land available to provide such a facility, it was possible that a site might be found across the border with Maidstone Borough, close either to Staplehurst or Headcorn.

Cllr Seán Holden, who was both a Borough and a County Councillor, was invited by Cllr Jukes to comment on the provision by the county of a waste and recycling site. Cllr Holden reiterated his dissatisfaction with how the modified service had been introduced, citing the 'decision' of this group which he said had no authority to agree to changes. He felt that it had been the Borough Council who had failed the residents of the Eastern area of the Borough, through (i) the reduced civic amenity service, as he saw it and (ii) demanding that the participating parish and town councils pay 50% of the cost of the service. On that basis, he advised, he considered it was the Borough Council who should be telling the County Council to provide a 'clean' household waste and recycling centre. He added that the residents were fearful that the civic amenity service, even in its reduced state, would eventually be withdrawn by the Borough Council.

Cllr Antony Harris corrected the assertion that it had been this group that had agreed to the modified service. He said that the parish and town councils had been fully engaged in a consultation process with the Borough Council and that meetings of this group had been used to discuss aspects of common concern. Ultimately, Cllr Harris said, it had been each individual local council that had made the decision. He also said that, before the modified service had been first mooted, he did not believe that local councils had previously been advised of the need to separate household and recycling waste.

Cllr Christopher Woodley said that he had been closely involved in the consultation process between TWBC and the parish and town councils regarding the revised service. He regretted that the issues now being raised had been revisited, when all parties concerned had now accepted the modified service and were doing their best to ensure that it worked, in the interests of their local communities. Cllr Woodley added that he was in favour of working with KCC to

find a suitable site in the Eastern part of the Borough for a household waste and recycling site.

Cllr Paul Barrington-King, who had previously been the Cabinet Portfolio-holder for Sustainability, stressed the significant benefits of the modified civic amenity service, especially in its boost to recycling and in its significant reduction in waste going to landfill. He said that the latter element had noticeably reduced KCC's landfill costs, adding that the best way forward was to lobby hard for a waste and recycling site that best served the needs of residents in the Eastern part of the Borough.

Cllr Rosie Broadbent said that one of the fears of the rural part of the Borough was that, once a service had been reduced, more cuts were likely to follow.

Cllr Julia Newman added that, while a household waste and recycling site for the Eastern part of the Borough would be very welcome, this should not be viewed as a replacement to the civic amenity service but as a complementary provision.

Cllr Jane March referred to the comments made about the abuse of the previous service, which some chairmen – and Cllr Holden – had dismissed. She said that there had been many incidents of abuse and mis-use of the previous service, adding that residents' concerns that tightening the control of what went into the civic amenity vehicle would lead to an increase in fly-tipping had not materialised. Cllr March said that the feedback which she received locally was that residents were happy with the modified service and readily acknowledged the environmental benefits it had brought.

Cllr Peter Davies said that he recalled the closure of the former refuse centre at Christmas Pie in Goudhurst and the start of the civic amenity vehicle service. He felt that there was a need to consider the waste collection service 'in the round' leading up to the renewal of the household waste and recycling contract, with the future of the civic amenity vehicle service being considered as part of that process. He stressed that there was a need for all parties to work more efficiently on this issue.

Councillor Holden reiterated his wish to see the civic amenity service remain in place, adding that he had no confidence that the Borough Council would guarantee its future. He also wondered what had happened to the significant reduction in waste that had previously gone to landfill (a drop from 1026 tonnes in a six-month period before the revised service to a figure of 215 tonnes in the latest statistics provided).

Cllr Maggie Fenton said that, prior to the revised service, her parish council had been concerned about the prospect of more incidents of fly-tipping. At this point, she added, there was more of an attitude of stoicism, but (a) there remained concerns about the current level of service and (b) it was felt there was an urgent need for kerb-side glass collection.

Cllr Jukes asked Mr Stevenson to sum up the next steps. Mr Stevenson said that consideration of the new household waste and recycling contract – due for implementation in March 2019 – was well underway. He urged interested parties to view the report of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee task and finish group, which set out the main issues.

Mr Stevenson said that, currently, approximately 33% of household waste consisted of food, which he advised should have been sent for composting. He added that the demand for kerbside glass collection was also very much part of the discussion taking place, adding that this relied upon an adequate sorting process being available at the treatment centre.

Mr Stevenson advised that the likely partnership which would emerge at the time of the new contract would be with Tonbridge & Malling and Dartford, because their respective contracts were due for renewal at the same time. He added that there was a high expectation that the waste and recycling market would be able to offer some improved options for the authority, to reflect the technological advances in the industry since the start of the current contract.

Cllr Jukes said that any further review of the civic amenity vehicle service would be examined within the context of the new household waste and recycling contract.

There were no specific action points arising from this update report.