

Cabinet

25 June 2020

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

Yes

Household Recycling and Waste Collection Service Update

Final Decision-Maker	Cabinet
Portfolio Holder(s)	Councillor Matthew Bailey - Sustainability
Lead Director	Paul Taylor – Director of Change of Communities
Head of Service	Gary Stevenson – Head of Housing, Health and Environment
Lead Officer/Author	Paul Taylor – Director of Change & Communities
Classification	Non-exempt
Wards affected	All

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

1. That Cabinet notes the Household Recycling and Waste Collection Service Update

Explain how this report relates to the Corporate Priorities in the Five Year Plan:

1. The provision of a new recycling and waste service to include the collection of glass bottles and jar and increase recycling rates was a key project in the Five Year Plan

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Agreed for publication by Director/Head of Service	3 June 2020
Cabinet	25 June 2020

Household Recycling and Waste Collection Service Update

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report updates Members on progress with the Household Recycling and Waste Collection Service following the introduction of the contract from 30 March 2019, improved recycling services from 30 September 2019 and the impact of Covid-19.
 - 1.2 At the time of publication the service is being affected by the knock on tipping delays at North Farm due to the rerouting of vehicles there from the Dunbrick transfer station following its temporary closure after a fire. Mitigating measures have been put in place, including using the North Farm Depot as a temporary transfer station for recycling and food waste and weekend catch up work.
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2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The development of a new household recycling and waste collection service and a partnership approach to working with Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council (TMBC) and Kent County Council has evolved over a number of years and was considered by Cabinet at its meetings in April 2017, in response to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's task and Finish Group report, and in November 2017.
- 2.2 At the November 2017 Cabinet approved the procurement of a new contract to include the collection of glass jars and bottles together with plastics and cans for recycling, paper and cardboard, a separate weekly collection of food waste, a fortnightly residual waste collection and an "opt in" fortnightly chargeable garden waste collection service to meet residents' expectations, achieve improved performance and secure shared benefits from a reduction in disposal costs.
- 2.3 The Open Procurement Process started at the end of January 2018 with the publication of an Invitation To Tender (ITT) in accordance with the Public Contract Regulations and European Procurement Directives. The ITT confirmed that the basis for the award of the contract would be the "most economically advantageous tender", with equal weighting given to both price and the responses to the quality questions within the ITT.
- 2.4 The tender incorporated a combined contract package of recycling and waste collection and street cleansing services across both boroughs.

- 2.5 The ITT set out that the two partner authorities would award one contract for an initial term of 8 years with two possible options to extend the contract. Any extension requires the mutual agreement of the two partner authorities. The first extension is for either up to a further 2 years or another term of 8 years. The second possible extension is available if the contract has already been extended for 8 years and will allow up to a further two years to be added to the contract. The overall maximum length of the contract will therefore be 18 years, if both of the extensions are exercised.
- 2.6 Five tenders were received by the deadline and were opened in the presence of TMBC and TWBC Portfolio Holders and officers. A two stage tender evaluation process was used to assess the bids.
- 2.7 Four tenders were taken forward to Stage 2 Evaluation. The bids were evaluated in detail by an Evaluation Panel of officers from TWBC and TMBC in terms of both price and quality. The overall evaluation score was based on a price-quality ratio of 50% price/50% quality. The ITT set out the matters which were taken into account and in respect of the quality submission they were service delivery arrangements, management and staffing structures, planned resources, proposed technologies, business continuity, performance measurement, customer care protocols and Added Value incorporating Social Value.
- 2.8 The tender evaluation was reported to the August 2018 Cabinet meeting and Urbaser were appointed as the successful contractor for an initial eight year term.
- 2.9 The contract commenced on 1 March 2019 with services being delivered in TMBC. TWBC services started on 30 March 2019 with Urbaser operating what was the existing "As Service".
- 2.10 In summary:
- The contract covers the collection of household refuse and the cleansing of streets across the boroughs of Tonbridge & Malling and Tunbridge Wells, in TWBC this involves circa 49,000 households.
 - Between 1 March – 29 September 2019 the contract matched the service delivery arrangements in the previous contract (the 'As Is' service) and the performance of Urbaser was good.
 - On the 30 September 2019 the new improved household recycling collection service was introduced, including weekly food waste; plastic bottles, trays, pots & tubs; glass bottles & jars; tins & cans paper & card/cardboard; household batteries, small electrical appliances and textiles.
 - The new Service includes an opt-in Garden Waste Service for which there is a separate annual charge.

3. SERVICE REVIEW

3.1 The contract and partnership arrangements sought to produce:

- Service improvements and efficiencies;
- Greater consistency across the Partner Authorities;
- Increased recycling performance
- An initial 30% uptake of the new garden waste service

3.2 The introduction of the new improved recycling collection service has increased the range of materials that are from the kerbside recycling including the weekly food waste, glass, bottles and jars plastic bottles, household batteries, small electrical appliances and textiles together with plastic trays, pots and tubs, tins & cans, paper and card/cardboard.

3.3 A range of new pages of information and access to services were created on the council's website allowing, online reporting and booking, detailed Frequently Asked Questions and a bin day checker. There were new articles in Local, information roadshows across the borough and social media campaign to explain the changes.

3.4 Having the consistency of the same collection methodology and material streams across the two councils generates efficiencies for the contractor and for the councils for example in terms of the marketing and information campaigns. There is also a coordinated approach is being taken to the monitoring of contract performance primary through the Joint Steering Group and the post of Partnership Manager. Where necessary, there is the ability for each Council to have the flexibility to manage the contract in response to its own individual operational circumstances if required.

3.5 The coordinated approach is managed through an operational project steering group established by the two borough councils and Kent County Council with Urbaser in attendance. The group met regularly to oversee the implementation and ongoing management of the Household Recycling and Waste Collection Service and has been meeting almost weekly since the end of March. The Steering Group is being managed in accordance with the principles of a draft Joint Working Agreement agreed by each of the Partners.

3.6 The provisional recycling performance figures for 2019/20 show that the council's recycling rate has increased to 50.2%, against a target of 50%, following the introduction of the new services, up from 47.9% in 2018/19. Dry recycling and food now accounts for 25.21%.

3.7 From the end of September to March we have collected 1074 tonnes of separate food waste, 3193 tonnes of glass, cans and plastics and 5151 tonnes of paper and cardboard. A breakdown of the composition of the brown bin recycling mix is shown at Appendix C. A further significant increase is expected in the first quarter of this year.

- 3.8 The initial sign up target for the new garden waste service was 12,000 subscriptions in the first year. The marketing campaign on social media and in print together with the online sign up system proved to be very successful. At the end of September 2019, 18,582 households had subscribed to the new service and by end of 2019/20 that had risen to 19,370 against an initial target of 12,000 subscriptions in year 1 and 14,771 in year 2.

4. CONTRACTOR PERFORMANCE

- 4.1 The new contract started on 1 March 2019 with the 'As Is' collection service in Tonbridge and Malling. Urbaser started collections in Tunbridge Wells on 30 March. The service starts went according to plan with the change over from the two incumbent contractors. The collection rounds and crews did not change significantly and performance was good.
- 4.2 Operating the 'As Is' allowed six months to make all the necessary arrangements to introduce the new recycling and waste service arrangements from 30 September 2019. This was a significant logistical project involving the design of new collection rounds to optimise vehicle usage, communicating collection day changes and information about the new service, delivering new garden waste bins and food caddies and providing replacement green boxes and brown bins.
- 4.3 The new service went live as planned in both council areas on 30 September with all material being collected. There were some outstanding deliveries of food caddies and garden waste bins at the time, but these were resolved.
- 4.4 In the early weeks/months following any roll out of a major new service it is expected that issues will arise. As anticipated, we experienced an increase in call volumes and reports of missed collections as crews got used to learning their new rounds. The graphs at Appendices A and B show the number of calls and missed collection reports and how they have declined over time. The Gateway team worked hard to handle the increase in calls and difficult conversations with residents who were experiencing problems.
- 4.5 The issues were specifically around the non-completion of rounds on their scheduled day, repeat missed collections and pull-out/assisted collections. Whilst these issues may have been expected, the speed with which they have been addressed by Urbaser has been both frustrating and disappointing.
- 4.6 The Waste and Street Scene team worked long hours 7 days a week to help resolve collection issues and deliver containers. This included providing directions to hard to find properties and collection points and adding this information to the back office Whitespace used by Urbaser, hot spotting particular locations and accompanying crews to help with wayfinding. We have also worked through the rounds data in Whitespace to help optimise rounds and the batching of missed collections.
- 4.7 Improvements were made but to ensure all residents received an acceptable level it was necessary for a significant dialogue to take place between Urbaser's

UK managing director and operations manager and the Leaders and Portfolio Holders and senior officers of both councils

- 4.8 In recognition of the poor performance, Urbaser agreed to fund the cost of extending existing garden waste subscriptions by a month.
- 4.9 The overall situation was improving November and December. Urbaser's performance over the two week Christmas and New Year period was, however, unsatisfactory in both council areas. The issue for Tunbridge Wells was a build up of missed collections that were not cleared quickly.
- 4.10 In response to both Councils' concerns the contract issues were again escalated with Urbaser. Urbaser gave a commitment to put things right and provide both depots with additional resources for as long as necessary to deal with the issues. A recovery action plan was developed and implemented, and progress was monitored at a weekly liaison meeting between the Heads of Service and Urbaser's UK Operations Manager.
- 4.11 Performance improved significantly since the implementation of the Action Plan contract, with crews completing rounds and not having to carry forward work to the weekend and resources were deployed to clear the back log of missed collections. The Council has also seen a notable reduction in calls, email traffic and complaints. It is now essential that this improved level of performance is sustained in the future but we are now in challenge period with the coronavirus pandemic.

5. IMPACT OF COVID-19

- 5.1 The shielding and self isolation guidance introduced as part of the restrictions put in place to control the spread of COVID-19 had an impact on the availability of crews to undertake the full range of services. As part of our business continuity planning, and in line with subsequent DEFRA guidance, our services were prioritised and a decision taken to suspend garden and bulky waste collections and the weekend civic amenity service from 25 March to ensure that sufficient staffing was available to maintain a reliable service for recycling, refuse and clinical waste collections.
- 5.2 The crews have worked very hard in a difficult situation where full social distancing is not possible. Industry guidance is being followed to maximise social distancing within each crew where possible and between crews and depot staff. In addition, the volume of material placed out has increased significantly due to the lock down restrictions and the packaging from greater online shopping.
- 5.3 Despite these issues, the level of missed collections did not increase (see Appendix A) and crews have been completing their rounds to schedule and not carrying work over to the weekend. The service has been helped by the lack of traffic on the roads and at the North Farm HWRC.
- 5.4 Following the suspension of the garden waste collections service proposals for restarting the service were kept under a weekly review to take account of our

ability to maintain reliable collection services across all material streams. Early in May it was agreed that sufficient staff resources were available to restart the garden waste collections from 11 May in TMBC and 18 May in TWBC, as per the existing schedule.

- 5.5 Through an agreement with KCC, the six garden waste rounds have been supplemented with two additional crews for the first collections cycles to assist with additional garden waste that has built up during the suspension.
- 5.6 The crews worked exceptionally hard; due to the increase in popularity of gardening during lock down and the suspended collections, nearly every bin was out for pick up and full, which resulting in 2 or 3 additional trips to the Transfer Station to tip. The crews were supported by additional supervision from Urbaser and TWBC staff to help identify the hot spot and hard to locate properties. Under the circumstances, performance in the first cycle was good but 405 missed collections out of circa 19,500 properties were reported.
- 5.7 We will be monitoring the performance of the second cycle of garden waste collection during week commencing 1 June and the recycling and refuse collections to ensure that sufficient resources are in place to maintain the reliability of the service.
- 5.8 To take account of the additional number of garden waste subscriptions that have been taken out and the additional tonnage we are working with Urbaser to look at rebalancing the garden waste rounds. This would involve the garden waste service operating in Tunbridge Wells over both weeks of the collection cycle. If this introduced, there will be no change to the day of the week that a resident's collection would be made but the week of collection may change. This proposal is still being worked on there will be a detailed communications plan to keep councillor and residents informed.

6. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 6.1 The report is for noting

7. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 7.1 No consultation has been necessary as part of this report.
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8. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Legal including Human Rights Act	This report does not give rise to any new legal implications.	Gary Stevenson Head of Housing Health and Environment 3 June 2020
Finance and other resources	There are no new financial implications from this report.	
Staffing establishment	This report does not give rise to any new staffing implications.	
Risk Management	There are no new risk management issues arising from this report	
Data Protection	This report does not give rise to any new data protection implications. A data protection impact assessment has been previously undertaken	
Environment and Sustainability	This report does not give rise to any new environmental implications. The new recycling service has increased the range of items that we collect for recycling.	
Community Safety	There are no community safety issues arising from this report	
Health and Safety	There are no health and safety issues arising from this report.	
Health and Wellbeing	There are no health and wellbeing issues arising from this report.	
Equalities	There are equalities issues arising from this report. An EQIA has previously been carried out	

9. REPORT APPENDICES

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

- Appendix A: Reported Missed Collections 30 September 2019 to 17 May 2020
- Appendix B: Telephone Calls to Gateway
- Appendix C: Recycling Composition

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None