

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

STREET SCENE and ENVIRONMENT SERVICES ADVISORY BOARD

05 October 2020

Report of the Director of Street Scene, Leisure & Technical Services

Part 1- Public

Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Non-Key Decision (Decision may be taken by the Cabinet Member)

1 STREET SCENE, WASTE AND PARKING - RESPONSE TO COVID 19

Summary

This report updates Members on progress with the themes/activities identified within the Street Scene, Waste and Parking section of the approved First Year Addendum to the Council's Corporate Strategy. This includes updates within Street Scene and Waste on service performance, the roll out of the new service arrangements to flats/communal areas, the reintroduction of the weekend bulky collection service, subscriptions for garden waste and the transfer of public conveniences to Parish Councils. The report also updates on timescales for the introduction of new car parking charges, consultation on parking charges in Aylesford and Martin Square car parks, and the potential introduction of digital payment options to car parks.

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 At its meeting on the 3 June 2020, Cabinet approved a First Year Addendum to the Corporate Strategy in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The Addendum identified a number of themes/activities and, within each, identified specific service areas to be reviewed, with an aim to Re-orientate and then Recover these services. Cabinet also agreed that progress with these themes/activities be monitored through updates to relevant Advisory Boards and Committees.
- 1.1.2 Included within the Addendum are themes/activities related to Street Scene and Waste, and Parking Services. Within the Review section the following service areas are identified:

Street Scene and Waste

- Review timescale for reintroducing weekend bulky collection service and subscriptions for garden waste including direct debit.
- Review any implications of Covid-19 for the transfer of public conveniences to parish councils.

Parking

- Review and evaluate timescales for new charges, and the forthcoming consultation on parking charges in Aylesford and Martin Square.
- Evaluate the potential of capital investments (such as contactless payments and other digital payment options) to car parks.

1.1.3 Further to the above the following were also identified under the Re-orientation section:

Street Scene and Waste

- In liaison with the contractor, Urbaser, undertake risk assessments and gear back up for complete reintroduction of core services.
- Refocus resources on the transfer process.

Parking

- Review timescales where required and come to an agreed approach on capital investments.

1.2 Street Scene and Waste

1.2.1 Core Service Provision – Members will be aware of the implications that Covid-19 has had on the delivery of core services within the Council’s Waste Contract. Through lockdown this was most evident with around 50% of contractor staff either on sick leave, self-isolating or “shielding” at some points. This was combined with significantly increased tonnages across all waste streams, a situation that was replicated across Kent and nationwide. As such, service provision was prioritised to focus on key kerbside collections and resulted in a number of other service suspensions including garden waste collections, new garden waste subscriptions, bulky collections (charged doorstep collection service) and the Saturday Freighter Service. In addition resources were also temporarily directed away from Street Cleansing.

1.2.2 As the Covid-19 staffing pressures eased for Urbaser all services have now been reintroduced with the exception of the Saturday Freighter Service. It is also worthy of note that tonnages remain high with the latest figures from KCC showing significant increases in all collection streams when compare with tonnages collected prior to the impacts of Covid-19 being felt:

Black bin waste	up 34%
Glass, cans & plastics	up 53%
Paper & card	up 68%
Food waste	up 24%

- 1.2.3 Reintroduction of Garden Waste Subscriptions – The ability for residents to sign up to the paid for garden waste collection service was suspended from 25 March to 7 June This reflected the fact that the service was also suspended and the administration and delivery of new bins would have placed additional pressure on the Council and its Contractor at a time when other service areas were being prioritised. Following the recommencement of the service new subscriptions also opened again in May. Since that date new subscriptions have been steady with around 350 in July and 300 in August. Overall the total number of households subscribed is 27,475 representing a 50% take up across the borough to date.
- 1.2.4 The vast majority of subscriptions are shortly due for renewal and Waste Services are working in liaison with the Council's Customer Services to ensure appropriate resources are in place to administer this. Whilst it is envisaged that the majority of renewals will be automated, it is still anticipated that a percentage will require assistance in this process. The Council's IT Services are also progressing the option of Direct Debit and it is hoped that this will be completed in time to allow residents to take up this option on renewal.
- 1.2.5 Reintroduction of Weekend Bulky Waste Collection (Saturday Freighter Service) – As highlighted above the weekend service is still currently suspended, in both Tonbridge and Malling and Tunbridge Wells. Whilst its suspension was in part related to staffing resources, the other key consideration was the implications of social distancing and the safety and welfare of those residents using the service and the staff operating them. This was also an issue for Kent County Council in relation to the Household Waste Recycling Centres and whilst these have reopened, attendance is controlled through a strict pre-booking system that still remains in place. The reopening of these KCC facilities does provide the opportunity for TMBC residents to dispose of bulky waste that they may have otherwise taken to our weekend service. The operational arrangements for our weekend service are currently being reviewed by Urbaser's health and safety team and a risk assessment is due to be presented to the Partnership. It is proposed that consideration will not be given to the reintroduction of this service until completion of the assessment and reassurance that appropriate measures can be implemented to ensure the safety of those using and operating it.
- 1.2.6 New Service Arrangements to Flats and Communal Properties – Members will be aware of the outstanding project to introduce new recycling opportunities to communal properties and flats. This project has been delayed for a number of reasons in the past, including Covid-19, though we are aware that Members and residents are keen to see this progress. Residual concerns still remain regarding performance issues with Urbaser and an Action Plan is currently in place and being monitored. At this time it is still felt that the Council needs to see reliable and sustained performance levels before this new project is commenced, and there also remains a concern regarding a potential second-wave of Covid-19 that could impact on staffing resources and service provision. It is, however, felt that a commitment needs to be made to the project and it is, therefore, proposed that a trial/pilot project be undertaken in a designated area. This will give the Council the

opportunity to review the implementation on a smaller scale and refine before roll-out across the borough as a whole. It is proposed that the trial/pilot takes place in January 2021 in a designated area of Tonbridge. It is then proposed to roll out across the borough in March/April/May 2021.

- 1.2.7 Bring Bank/Recycling Sites – The reduction of bring bank/recycling sites across the borough is also pending and Members have previously approved the commencement of the project following completion of the roll-out of new services to flat/communal properties. The project will see the reduction of sites to 10 key strategic locations and could be undertaken on a phased basis. It is, therefore, proposed that the principal of commencing this project now be considered, with the removal of any sites prior to the flat/communal roll out being subject to liaison with the relevant local Members and Cabinet Member. Alternatively, approval could be given to progress this project on the understanding that residents (including those in flat and communal properties) will always have the opportunity to recycle at one of the 10 retained strategic sites.
- 1.2.8 Transfer of Public Conveniences – Members of this Board will recall that the transfer of public conveniences to Parish /Town Councils has been approved by Cabinet following recommendations considered by this Board with an estimated annual saving of £70,000 contributing to the Savings and Transformation Strategy. The timescale agreed prior to the pandemic was 1st April 2021 and it is felt that this timescale can still be achieved. The transfer relies on the legal agreements being actioned and improvements made to the existing facilities so they are in a fit state to transfer. An update report on progress will be presented to the next meeting of this Board.

1.3 Parking

- 1.3.1 The timescale for the introduction of the new car parking charges previously considered by this Board are reported separately in these papers. The separate report also considers the potential timescale for consultation on the introduction of car parking charges to Martin Square and Aylesford car parks.
- 1.3.2 In terms of the potential introduction of contactless payments and other digital payment options an Officer Group including representatives from IT and Financial Services has been established to consider a range of options together with any capital and revenue cost implications. Options under consideration include the conversion of the existing machines to accept contactless payments, the possible phasing out of payment by cash, the retention and improvement to the phone based system and the potential development of an app for the authority. Members will be interested to note that due to the influence of the pandemic 30% of all payments are currently made by use of the existing Parkmobile telephone system. It is the intention to report back to the next meeting of this Board on progress.

1.4 Legal Implications

- 1.4.1 The statutory framework governing the response to the pandemic is evolving and changing on a frequent basis, both in the restrictions placed upon individuals and upon the responsibility of local authorities. Specific proposals or changes brought forward following a review of the services will be assessed at the appropriate time in liaison with Legal Services to ensure they are lawful.

1.5 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.5.1 Management Team and endorsed by Cabinet on 19 May 2020 imposed an 'essential spend only' policy for 2020/21 in order to preserve resources and set a 'savings target' of at least £500,000 to be delivered as a result of this policy.
- 1.5.2 An earmarked reorientation/post emergency reserve of £200,000 has been established to assist the Council in some of its recovery activity.

1.6 Risk Assessment

- 1.6.1 The departmental operational risk assessment has been updated substantially and is being revised on an ongoing basis as government guidance on Covid-19 changes.

1.7 Equality Impact Assessment

- 1.7.1 The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

1.8 Policy Considerations

- 1.8.1 Business Continuity/Resilience, Health and Safety and Community

1.9 Recommendations

- 1.9.1 It is **RECOMMENDED TO CABINET** that
- i) the update to the approved First Year Addendum to the Council's Corporate Strategy be noted;
 - ii) the reintroduction of the Saturday Freighter Service will be considered following the completion of a full health and safety assessment and reassurance that appropriate measures can be implemented to ensure the safety of those using and operating it;
 - iii) the trial/pilot roll-out to flats and communal properties for the new service takes place in January 2021 in a designated area of Tonbridge, with the intention to roll out across the rest of the borough in March/April/May 2021, and
 - iv) the reduction of bring bank sites across the borough commences prior to the new service provision being rolled out to the flats and communal properties.

The Director of Street Scene, Leisure & Technical Services confirms that the proposals contained in the recommendation(s), if approved, will fall within the Council's Budget and Policy Framework.

Background papers:

Nil

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