

**TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**STREET SCENE and ENVIRONMENT SERVICES ADVISORY BOARD**

**08 December 2020**

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

**Part 1- Public**

**Matters for Information**

**1 STREET SCENE AND WASTE SERVICES - RESPONSE TO COVID 19**

**Summary**

**This report updates Members on progress with the themes/activities identified within the Street Scene and Waste section of the approved First Year Addendum to the Council's Corporate Strategy. This includes updates on service performance, the roll out of the new service arrangements to flats/communal areas, the reduction in the number of bring bank sites and the reintroduction of the weekend bulky collection service, subscriptions for garden waste and the transfer of public conveniences to Parish/Town Councils.**

**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. Included within the Addendum are themes/activities related to Street Scene and Waste.

1.1.2 At the last meeting of this Advisory Board on the 5 October Members received an update on the aforementioned themes and activities and it was agreed that:

- 1) the reintroduction of the Saturday freighter service be considered following completion of a full health and safety assessment;
- 2) a trial/pilot rollout of the new service arrangements to flats and communal areas takes place in a designated area of Tonbridge in January 2021, with the intention to roll out across the rest of the borough next Spring; and
- 3) the reduction in bring bank sites across the borough be commenced prior to the new service provision being rolled out to flats and communal areas.

## **1.2 Service Performance**

- 1.2.1 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 the period of the first 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 that is further detailed below.
- 1.2.3 Service performance has significantly improved following the re-introduction of services and is being reflected in increased round completions, a reduction in missed collections and reduced customer comments/complaints. This has been as a result of a number of factors which are detailed in a separate report in these papers.
- 1.2.4 At the time of writing this report there have not been any performance issues associated with the second lockdown period.

## **1.3 Reintroduction of Weekend Bulky Waste Collection[Saturday Freighter Service]**

- 1.3.1 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. To date the Council has received an extremely low level of public comment on the suspension of this service.
- 1.3.2 Whilst a generic Health and Safety Risk Assessment for the service has been provided by Urbaser the implications of this will now need to be considered in relation to each individual site. It is, however, anticipated that this will not commence until the end of the current national lockdown and will also need to take into consideration any future restrictions.

## **1.4 New Service Arrangements to Flats and Communal Properties**

- 1.4.1 As highlighted above, at the meeting of the 5 October Members of this Advisory Board approved a trial/pilot rollout of the new service arrangements to flats and communal areas in a designated area of Tonbridge in January 2021. Subject to the outcome of the trial it is the intention to roll out across the rest of the borough next Spring.
- 1.4.2 Progress has been made on the arrangements for the trial through an internal Officer working group and liaison with Urbaser. Final details of the trial are currently been discussed prior to liaison with relevant Local Members and communication with affected residents.

## **1.5 Bring Bank/Recycling Sites**

- 1.5.1 The reduction of bring bank/recycling sites across the borough is pending and will see the reduction of sites to 10 key strategic locations across the borough. As highlighted above, at the meeting of the 5 October Members of this Advisory Board approved the reduction in bring bank sites across the borough be commenced prior to the new service provision being rolled out to flats and communal areas. This will take place in liaison with the relevant Local Members and is being undertaken on a phased basis. The first phase of removals is due to commence from the second week in January to avoid the festive period and contact with Local Members and the relevant Parish/Town Council's will be made in advance. Advance signage will be placed at each site that will also advise on the nearest alternative recycling site.

## **1.6 Transfer of Public Conveniences**

- 1.6.1 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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.
- 1.6.2 Liaison is currently taking place with all relevant Parish/Town Council's on the proposed transfer and legal documentation has been drafted. Condition surveys of the existing toilets have been undertaken with any works to be scheduled prior to transfer.
- 1.6.3 At the current time only one Parish Council has formally declined the offer of transfer with this being Hadlow Parish Council. As such the facilities in Hadlow will be closed from the 1 April 2021, and the same approach will be adopted for other facilities if required.

## **1.7 Legal Implications**

- 1.7.1 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.

## **1.8 Financial and Value for Money Considerations**

- 1.8.1 Management Team, 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.
- 1.8.2 An earmarked reorientation/post emergency reserve of £200,000 has been established to assist the Council in some of its recovery activity.

## **1.9 Risk Assessment**

- 1.9.1 The Operational Risk Assessment for Street Scene Leisure and Technical Services has been updated and is being revised on an ongoing basis as government guidance on Covid-19 changes.

## **1.10 Policy Considerations**

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

Background papers:

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Nil

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