

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

STREET SCENE and ENVIRONMENT SERVICES ADVISORY BOARD

08 February 2022

Report of the Director 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 COMMUNAL RECYCLING SERVICE

Summary

This report details the planned roll out of new recycling services to properties currently using communal bin facilities following the pilot in Tonbridge.

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 Cabinet previously agreed that a pilot rollout of the new service arrangements to flats and communal areas in a designated area of Tonbridge would be undertaken prior to roll out across the remainder of the borough.
- 1.1.2 As reported to Members of this Advisory Board on 31 August and 23 November, the introduction of new recycling services to those 500 properties included within the pilot phase commenced on Saturday 4 September 2021. New recycling bins were delivered, and the communal bin stores reconfigured to reduce some of the residual waste capacity in preparation for moving to alternate weekly collections. All of the bin stores had new containers delivered for the separate collection of card & paper, and of plastics, glass & cans.
- 1.1.3 In order for Officers to be able to monitor use of the new service, including tonnages & contamination levels, these collections were moved from a Friday to Saturday collections, as the collections could then take place separately from other properties in that area. This has enabled us to receive separate tonnage data from the disposal sites.
- 1.1.4 The first recycling collections took place on 18 September 2021, with fortnightly recycling collections alternating with fortnightly refuse collections from then onwards. Officers have been monitoring the use of the bins on a daily basis and identifying where bins were not being used correctly. They then communicated with those residents and the appropriate management agents in order to reduce the risk of recycling bins being contaminated and rejected by the reprocessors.

- 1.1.5 In the period 11 September to 11 December 2021, 10.58 tonnes of recycling were collected, and 47.6 tonnes of refuse. This gives a dry recycling rate of approximately 22%. This compares with the dry recycling rate from the households already receiving the service of 28%. This would indicate that although there is still potential to improve the amount of recycling being separated by these properties, they have generally adapted well to the changes and are embracing the new service positively.
- 1.1.6 Officers have continued to monitor volumes, contamination levels, resident enquiries, etc., throughout the pilot phase. The collections will shortly be moved back onto the Friday frontline vehicles which service the surrounding area. At the time of writing this report, the impact on their vehicle capacity and working time has not yet been fully assessed.

1.2 Lessons learnt

- 1.2.1 The aim of running the initial pilot phase was to gain as much experience as possible of the challenges faced and lessons learnt for the future. Whilst many residents in such properties are keen to engage with new recycling services, the use of communal bins & stores leaves very little control as to who puts what materials in which bin. Nationally, communal bin stores have offered many challenges in managing use of the bins, achieving quality materials for recycling, and in minimising contamination levels, which when mixed with recycling from neighbouring properties significantly increase the risk of loads being rejected by the reprocessors. This would also impact on the level of performance payments this Council receive from Kent County Council for diverting waste from incineration to recycling reprocessors.
- 1.2.2 The elements that Officers believe have contributed to the success of the pilot phase are:
- Significant amount of time in preparation work, assessing waste & recycling levels prior to the introduction of the new containers to try to gain best assessment of what size & quantity of new bins were required.
 - High level of engagement with residents and managing agents on the pilot phase properties. This included site visits, leaflets, posters, dealing with specific resident enquiries, signage in the bin stores, stickers on the new bins, etc.
 - Daily checks on the bin store to monitor levels of recycling & contamination and arranging clearance of any dumped waste & bulky items, as well as removing small levels of contamination to ensure that when the collections take place, contamination is at a minimum.
 - Ongoing communication throughout the pilot phase, thanking residents for their efforts and reinforcing messages about what can be put in each bin.

- Most of the managing agents have also been positively engaged, providing assistance with any misuse of the bins and using their own communications channels to assist in making it a success.
- Proactively making small changes to the quantity of bins in each store – rather than waiting for residents’ complaints.

1.3.4 The majority of the work was undertaken by the Waste Contract Officer. This was essential to the success of the pilot, and in minimising the need for others in the team to divert away from managing the frontline service and dealing with residents.

1.2.3 In preparing for the wider roll out to the remaining communal stores across the borough, a number of considerations have been taken into account:

- Not learning from the initial pilot phase could lead to significant issues, both operational & reputational.
- Restricted time for preparation work could lead to issues once the services start.
- Restricted time for monitoring could leave Officers less able to react to any problems, customer enquiries, etc, leading to increased dissatisfaction with the service and the Council.
- If issues are not addressed effectively during each phase of the roll out, staff resource may have to be diverted from the next phase, causing delays to the project timetable.
- Problems in each phase will impact on residents’ desire and willingness to engage with the improved services.
- If residents don’t engage this could have a negative impact on recycling rates that could be lower than we might have achieved, as well as impacting on the level of performance payments received from KCC, as well as increased disposal costs for any heavily contaminated loads
- Resolving issues will require increased officer resource & time and divert them from managing other priority aspects of the service, as well as placing additional pressure on our call centre.
- The initial pilot phase was in a relatively compact geographical area, whereas subsequent phases will each have a wider geographical spread, making monitoring & site visits more time consuming & resource intensive.

1.3 Roll Out to remaining Communal Stores

- 1.3.1 As outlined above, the pilot phase has required very intensive preparation, monitoring, management, and regular communication with residents & managing agents to ensure its success. There are a further 222 communal bin stores, servicing approximately 2500 properties to receive the improved services, and if we were to adopt the same timescale, we would need a further seven phases with three months for each phase (21 months in total).
- 1.3.2 This timescale would clearly be unacceptable to these residents, given that they have already waited so long for the service to be provided. To reflect this a proposed project timetable with a shorter timescale has been developed for each phase. Whilst this may not give as much resilience as with the pilot phase, it is felt to be realistic.
- 1.3.3 To not waste time the next phase of the roll out has already begun, including more properties in central Tonbridge, including Lyons Crescent, East Street, London Road, Pembury Road, etc. These form Phase 2 of the proposed timetable for the remaining areas. The phasing below is being proposed following liaison with the Portfolio Holder and Leader of the Council:

BOROUGH ROLL OUT – PROPOSED PHASING

| | | | | |
|---------|----------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|---|
| Phase 2 | January - 36 units | 573 property count approximate | February - Monitoring | Tonbridge area continued |
| Phase 3 | March – 37 units | 702 approx. | April - Monitoring | Hadlow, East Peckham, Tonbridge cont'd |
| Phase 4 | May – 45 units | 264 approx. | June - Monitoring | Snodland, Borough Green, Walderslade |
| Phase 5 | July – 45 units | 373 approx. | August - Monitoring | RBLV Aylesford/Ditton/Eccles |
| Phase 6 | September – 45 units | 421 approx. | October - Monitoring | East Malling, West Malling, Kings Hill |
| Phase 7 | November – 50 units | 213 approx. | December - Monitoring | Larkfield, Aylesford (The Lakes, Abery Drive, Eaton Place, Cygnet Court, Ingram Close, Sherwood Ave, Perch Close) |

- 1.3.4 I am sure some Members may wish to see the roll out completed on a quicker timescale than outlined above, in order to meet the wishes of residents. Whilst this is fully understood, it should be noted that the proposed timescale is already significantly shorter than the pilot scheme and a further accelerated programme would, in Officers view, run the real risk of the service not being delivered to a required standard which would lead to complaints, further reputational damage to the Council and a long-term failure of increasing recycling rates from flats. This would require additional Officer training and resource for the Council to accelerate the timescale, and this not considered achievable within the time available. It is

also felt essential to learn and apply the lessons learnt from the pilot scheme as detailed earlier in the report. Any additional resource would be potentially significant Budget growth. In overview, the option of an accelerated timescale to that proposed in the report is not considered to be realistic and represents a high risk of failure, which Members clearly need to be fully aware of when making their decision.

- 1.3.5 The full reduction of bring bank/recycling sites across the borough is also pending and will see the reduction of sites to 10 key strategic locations across the borough. Phase 1 of the removals took place in January 2021 although further phased removals were put on hold pending the roll out of recycling to communal bin stores. This approach is still proposed with bring/sites only being removed following the roll out of recycling in their local catchment area. Local Members and the relevant Parish/Town Council's will be made aware in advance of their removal.

1.4 Legal Implications

- 1.4.1 The Council has a statutory duty to provide refuse and recycling collection service. The proposed arrangements relating to communal recycling services will assist the Council in complying with this duty and are required within the existing waste services contract.

1.5 Climate Change Impacts

- 1.5.1 The further roll out of improved recycling services to communal bin stores will contribute to the delivery of the targets set out in the Council's adopted Climate Change Strategy.

1.6 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.6.1 There are no financial implications to the roll out as the service is included in the existing waste services contract.
- 1.6.2 It is essential to the success of the project that it is led by the Waste Services Officer. The Officer's temporary contract finishes on 31 March 2022 and will need to be extended until the end of the calendar year. The cost of this unbudgeted expenditure will be £29,753 and is supported by Management Team.

1.7 Risk Assessment

- 1.7.1 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. Specific consideration will need to be given to the delivery of this project and changing guidance could impact on its delivery.

1.7.2 The risk to the success of the project will be mitigated by applying lessons learnt from the pilot.

1.8 Equality Impact Assessment

1.8.1 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.

1.9 Policy Considerations

1.9.1 Climate change

1.10 Recommendations

It is **RECOMMENDED** to Cabinet that the proposed approach and phasing of the roll out of recycling services to communal properties as detailed in the report be considered for approval by Members, and the unbudgeted staffing costs outlined in 1.6.2 be noted.

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

contact: David Campbell-
Lenaghan

Robert Styles

Director of Street Scene, Leisure & Technical Services