

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMUNITIES AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY SELECT COMMITTEE

07 February 2024

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

Part 1- Public

Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Key Decision

1 RECYCLING BRING SITES

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 Prior to the implementation of the improved kerbside recycling services in 2019, the Council provided a network of 39 recycling bring sites across the borough, collecting a range of materials including glass bottles & jars; paper, cardboard, plastic pots, tubs & trays; and textiles. The number & type of containers at each site varied, depending largely on the space available. Some sites were hosted on private land and others on TMBC-managed land. Some sites also had containers provided by charities for the collection of books, shoes and CDs.
- 1.1.2 When planning for the proposed new recycling services, it was anticipated that once the kerbside collection service for glass, plastics and paper & card had been implemented, demand for the bring site network would significantly reduce and that bring site provision would need to be reviewed. At that time, Members agreed to reduce the number of bring sites across the borough from 39 to ten, that would be sited at 'strategic' locations. These sites 10 Strategic Sites were:
- Tesco Car Park – Larkfield
 - Station Approach – Borough Green
 - Rocford Road Car Park – Snodland
 - Sovereign Way Car Park – Tonbridge
 - Asda Car Park – Kings Hill
 - Morrisons Car Park – Larkfield
 - Bailey Bridge Car Park – Aylesford
 - Hadlow College – Hadlow
 - High Street Car Park – West Malling
 - Village Hall Car Park – Burham
- 1.1.3 However, there was an acknowledgement that once the kerbside service had been fully bedded in, there may be a further review of these sites and that further reductions might be made subject to Member approval.
- 1.1.4 Due to the problems experienced during the initial roll out of the new kerbside collection services, Members agreed that the roll out of recycling to communal bin

stores would be deferred, and as a result the removal of bring sites was also deferred until that project had been completed (*SSEAB – 11 February 2020*).

- 1.1.5 Members subsequently approved a phased programme of bring site removal, meaning that bring sites would generally be removed only when the communal bin stores in the locality had the new recycling services in place (*SSEAB – 8 February 2022*). The first phase of bring site removals had already taken place in January 2021 but only for a number of smaller rural sites on which residents with communal bin collections were not heavily reliant.
- 1.1.6 The second phase took place in August 2022, as recycling bins were provided to communal bin stores in those areas. The third phase took place during July & August this year, leaving only the strategic sites listed above, with the exception of the facility at West Malling car park. The latter had to be removed in April this year due to a sinkhole appearing in the car park immediately in front of the bring site. Although the sink hole was repaired, officers were advised that the recycling banks could not be returned due to the risk of further structural issues from any ongoing emptying of the banks by the collection vehicles. Officers had previously investigated other potential options within West Malling, but none had been identified. As such the facility has not been reinstated.
- 1.1.7 The Waste Services team have received very few enquiries from residents about the removal of the sites during any of the three phases to date, nor have any formal complaints been received.

1.2 Review of Current Bring Sites

- 1.2.1 Since the introduction of the new recycling services in October 2019, use of all sites has reduced significantly as had been anticipated. This is reflected in the tonnage of materials being collected from the bring sites, even prior to the phased removal programme:

		Glass	Cans	Paper	Plastic	Textiles
2018/19	Pre-new recycling	2292	4	319	372	73
2019/20	New recycling (part-year)	1432	3	238	152	73
2020/21	Covid	336	9	134	25	22
2021/22		340	4	119	29	82
2022/23	Communal Roll out	233	5	113	30	74
Variance 2018/19 v 2022/23						
	Tonnes	-2059	1	-206	-342	1
	%age change	-90%	+25%	-65%	-92%	+1%

- 1.2.2 Members will note that the overall tonnage of most of the materials which are now collected from kerbside has reduced significantly and continuing to reduce with the roll out of the communal recycling service. In 2022/23, bring site materials accounted for around 2% of all recycling collected, compared with 14% in 2018/19.
- 1.2.3 Anecdotal evidence from officers & residents – and from dumped rubbish found by officers at the remaining bring sites – would indicate that much of the material currently being taken to bring sites is from commercial entities. The bring sites are intended for household waste only and should not be used by businesses who are trying to avoid complying with their own legal duties to have commercial waste collection arrangements in place. As a result, the residents of Tonbridge & Malling are in effect subsidising the disposal of commercial waste by businesses.
- 1.2.4 In 2023/24 financial year, it is estimated that the cost of emptying the glass, plastics, card, paper & cans containers at the bring sites will be £100,300, even reflecting the recent removal of the Phase 3 sites. This does not include the current costs of cleansing the sites, emptying of litter bins at bring sites, any ongoing maintenance costs for repairs, replacement containers, signage, etc. Using last year's tonnage data, this equates to a cost of £263 per tonne of those material collected at bring sites, compared with £123 per tonne for the same materials collected at kerbside. This clearly represents significantly better value for money when recycling is collected from kerbside than from bring sites.
- 1.2.5 The other main material collected at the remaining bring sites is textiles. The Council's contract with LM Barry has textile banks at three of the 'strategic' sites: Borough Green; Morrisons at Larkfield; and Sovereign Way/ Angel Centre car parks. Tonbridge. Previously the banks generated a small income, £6000 in 2022/23 when they were located at seven sites. Although currently residents are able to recycle small amounts of textiles from kerbside, there is limited capacity in the containers attached to the collection vehicles. As such, if all textile banks were to be removed, in order to dispose of larger items or amounts of textiles residents would need to take them to their nearest Household Waste Recycling Centre. There are also a number of charity banks (Oxfam & BHF) on some sites for textiles, shoes, books, CDs, from which 30 tonnes of recycling were collected in 22/23. Although the Council receives no income from these, apart from as part of the KCC Performance Payments, some charities may depend on donations through their banks to stock their shops and other income streams.
- 1.2.6 Following the completion of the roll out of recycling to communal bin stores, and a review of a number of individual properties that previously had no recycling containers, there remain just 124 households that do not have access to kerbside recycling collections. (A further 12 properties in central Tonbridge are being refurbished and will have recycling bins installed once works are completed).
- 1.2.7 Almost half of the 124 properties consist of two locations. One is in Hamble Road (40 properties) where Clarion Housing has refused permission for the Council to

provide additional bin storage to accommodate additional recycling bins. Clarion Housing is currently paying for a second weekly collection due to the poor infrastructure at these properties even for the refuse bins. The other is in Avebury Avenue (17 properties) where a management company has instructed removal of the recycling bins that we had originally provided due to high levels of misuse of the bin store by their tenants. The remaining properties currently do not have sufficient space on their properties to store either additional containers or in some cases any bins at all.

- 1.2.8 Given that we now collect refuse from around 57,000 households, only 0.2% now have no access to kerbside recycling collections. Should the stance of the two organisations mentioned above change, the Council will provide the necessary infrastructure & containers for their 57 properties.

1.3 Options

- 1.3.1 Members may wish to consider the following options, or any alternatives that they may wish officers to investigate further:

- (1) maintain the 'strategic' sites as per the original plans for the new kerbside service and as listed at 1.1.2 above, with the exception of West Malling car park;
- (2) remove all remaining sites due to the reasons detailed at section 1.2 of this report;
- (3) remove all remaining sites but retain the textile and/or charity banks located at the 'strategic' sites detailed at 1.2.5 above.

1.4 Legal Implications

- 1.4.1 The Council has a legal duty to collect household waste, but the method & frequency of collections is not mandated in current waste-related regulations, apart from the separate collections of food waste by the end of 2024. Removal of the remaining bring sites will not affect the Council's current adherence to its legal duty.

1.5 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.5.1 As detailed at 1.2.4 above, in terms of cost per tonne of recyclate, the collection of glass, plastics, paper & card and cans from kerbside provides better value for money than collecting them from bring sites. The provision of bring sites presents even less value for money when considering the very small number of households that currently do not yet have access to kerbside recycling collections.
- 1.5.2 There may be a small income generated from retaining the textile banks detailed at 1.2.5 above, but this may be offset by the costs of monitoring & maintaining those sites.

- 1.5.3 The removal of the banks will result in a one-off cost of up to £30,000 if the decision is taken to remove all nine sites. As with previous sites this would include disposal/recycling of the old banks and reinstatement of the sites if needed (removal of signs, patching, lining etc). This cost would need to be included in the appropriate revenue budget.

1.6 Risk Assessment

- 1.6.1 There may be some reputational risk to the Council from the small number of residents who do not yet have access to kerbside collections.
- 1.6.2 There may be some reputational risk to the Council from any removal of charity recycling banks from the remaining 'strategic' sites. However, there have been no complaints to date from their removal from other bring sites.

1.7 Equality Impact Assessment

- 1.7.1 The issues discussed 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 Community

1.9 Recommendations

- 1.9.1 The Committee is requested to consider the review of current recycling bring site provision, the options identified and make recommendations to the Cabinet.

Background papers:

Nil

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