

Operational Services Cabinet Committee

Wednesday, 23 September 2020

7.30 pm

Present:

Cllr Lee Croxton (Chair)

Councillors: Dakota Dibben
Gary Harding
Nirmal Khabra
Peter Scollard
Frank Wardle
Ejaz Aslam
Harold Craske
Lyn Milner
Emma Morley

Stuart Alford Assistant Director (Operations)
Joel Simons Waste Projects & Compliance Officer
Mark Lees Regulatory Services Manager
Stewart McDonald Technical Services Support Officer
Lauren Wallis Committee Services Officer (minutes)

6. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Conrad Broadley, Councillor Leslie Pearton, Councillor Gurbax Singh and Councillor Steve Thompson who were substituted by Councillors Ajaz Aslam, Harold Craske, Lyn Milner and Emma Morley respectively.

7. Minutes from Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 June 2020 were signed by the Chair.

8. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

9. Litter Bin Replacement & Recycling on-the-go Trial

The Assistant Director (Operations) presented with a report that provided an overview of plans to replace the litter bins and trial recycling 'on-the-go' bins at St Andrew's Gardens. Details were also included on proposals for the further introduction of recycling 'on-the-go' at the Riverside Leisure area and Woodlands Park, subject to the success of the trial.

The Waste Projects & Compliance Officer advised that the best and most viable way to implement the scheme had been considered and were set out in the report. Open areas such as parks were controlled areas and were considered to be easy to monitor. WRAP studies had suggested that typically 60% of the contents of litter bins was recyclable. Therefore, recycling 'on-the-go' would lower residual waste arisings and would increase recycling performance as well as helping promote and reinforce recycling behaviours at home and at work. Feedback from counterparts in seven Kent district councils had suggested that contamination of street recycling was very high, particularly in town centre locations or near to fast food establishments and this resulted in the contents being disposed of as residual waste. It was noted that the current bins at St Andrew's Gardens were not fit for purpose and the report showed photos of the replacement recycling bins. It was hoped that following the trial, this scheme and the associated bins would be spread throughout the Borough which would also result in a consistent style of bin, with the size depending on location, being used in Gravesham.

The following points were raised on this subject:

- The bins are made of metal and had metal liners so fire damage would be minimal. However, it was noted that there was a very low incidence of fires in park bins.
- The mechanics of the Deposit Return Scheme had been set out in a Government consultation document and another was awaited. Generally it meant that, in future, the purchase price of certain items such as canned drinks and drinks in plastic bottles would include a tax for example 10 pence on a can. If the consumer returns the empty can or bottle to the shop, the item would be put through a machine and the consumer would get a money off voucher or money back in return.
- It was noted that the removal of bins from some areas had resulted in less litter. The officer advised that this was the case and it was hoped that bins would be placed in the appropriate site and would be the appropriate size for the area. This would be monitored to check that the capacity and location of the bin was correct.
- The new bins were welcomed as it was felt that old, overflowing bins sent the wrong message for residents and for visitors and larger bins were suggested for the High Street area. Members were reminded that this was the start of a review for the whole Borough and the capacity of the bin would depend on where it was sited and how busy the area was and how much litter was collected. For example, along the narrower pavements in the High Street, bins would have to be smaller and more narrow to allow pedestrians to pass by safely.
- It was suggested that a message in relation to littering was placed on the side of the new bins. The officer agreed to consult with the Communications Manager on this point as he did not want to risk diluting the message on the front of the bins.
- The Assistant Director (Operations) advised that contamination of recyclates was a big concern which was why open spaces were being used in the trial. Town Centre bins tended to contain more contaminants. However, brightly coloured messages on the side of bins might help people make the right bin choice. In addition, clear sacks were being used in the bins so collectors could see what had been disposed of. The trial was intended to assist in ironing out problems before the roll out of the scheme.
- Following questions on the ability of disabled people such as wheelchair users and the visually impaired to use the new bins, the Committee was advised that the new bins were easier to access than the existing bins as they were side, rather than top, loading and were not very high. Given wheelchair users could access the new bins it was expected that children could also use them. In addition visually impaired people would be assisted by the aperture of the recycling bin being a different shape and surrounded by a brightly coloured line.

- Members were advised that page 8 of the report showed photos of both the double bins and noted that the litter side would also have an ash tray. In addition, the bin as shown on page 13 of the report was more aesthetically pleasing and its use would be investigated.

In conclusion, the Chair stated that he felt that this was a very good scheme. Bins would need to have the Borough Council logo on them as well as the appropriate signage together with the scheme being given significant publicity. If the trial was successful it would be rolled out otherwise the Council faced the potential of losing recyclable material. The Assistant Director (Operations) confirmed that discussions had been held with the Communications Team with regard to publicity.

Resolved that the report be noted.

10. Portfolio Performance Update - Operational Services Projects

The Assistant Director (Operations) introduced the report which highlighted work carried out since January 2020 including a Covid-19 progress overview. Members were advised that all services were now 100% up and running and information had been passed on to staff in the last few days reiterating Government guidance on social distancing and staying safe.

In February additional investment in street cleaning had moved been progressed and there were new cleaning staff in the town centre providing coverage from 7am to 6pm seven days a week. The aim of the later working hours was to ensure the town centre was cleaned latter in the day to promote the evening economy. A Maxvac Gladiator had been purchased which steam cleans pavements including the removal of chewing gum. This machine was currently being used on the town centre but may also be able to be used in other shopping parade areas. A smaller road sweeping vehicle had been procured which enabled easier access between vehicles when cleaning the streets.

The Adopt a Street – The Street Champions initiative had been launched which encouraged the Council and the community to work together and the report set out the improvements to enable this initiative. This included a new poster design with a harder hitting message to make littering as unacceptable and unsociable things like as drink driving. Good engagement with the public had been achieved and the scheme had also been offered to the parish councils with Meopham, Luddesdown and Cobham expressing their interest.

The Assistant Director (Operations) reported that a great deal of work on fly-tipping had been undertaken in the last few months. The officer had also worked with Kent County Council with regard to the installation of covert cameras and associated signage in rural areas. Since lockdown three Fixed Penalty Notices had been issued. However, it had not been possible to prosecute the offenders because the courts were too busy as a result of the delay in trying cases during lockdown.

Members were advised that there was a new enforcement team in the Community Safety Team and the two teams would work closely together and had already identified the fly-tipping hotspots.

Officers were also working on making social media videos for the Duty of Care campaign which were designed to demonstrate that fly-tipping was not acceptable and that offenders

would be caught and punished. In addition, work was being done to provide residents with the correct information about how to dispose of their rubbish.

The Bartec Waste System had continued to progress and develop digital change within the Waste Management Team with the commercial waste service now moved onto the system.

The officer highlighted the increase in household recycling and garden waste. In addition more black sacks were being put out by households and the service had applied a practical approach to the collection of the additional sacks during the lockdown period. Gravesham had been the first local authority to make this decision in Kent. There had also been a high level of publicity about contamination of recyclables which had shown a positive effect. In addition, crews checked recycling bins and households who were disposing of the incorrect items in these bins were contacted.

The Committee was also given an update on the progress of the Horticultural Service and the Cemetery Service.

The following points were made during discussion on this item:

- Officers were thanked for a very positive report and the excellent work of the refuse collectors during the lockdown was highlighted.
- The Waste Projects & Compliance Officer was congratulated on the success of the Street Champions scheme. The officer advised that when the report had been written there were 168 volunteers and there were now 162 streets, alleyways and open spaces had been adopted. In addition, there would be further publicity to promote this scheme. The Chair reported that he had recently met some Street Champions and had been very impressed with their work and the number of full orange litter bags and he thanked the officer for inspiring the residents.
- It was noted that officers had helped set up a clean up in the Central ward which had gone very well. However, it was noted that the residents Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) seemed to think that fly-tipping was an acceptable way of disposing of rubbish on the roadside outside a property. The Assistant Director (Operations) reported that the Waste Projects & Compliance Officer was working with the Communications Team to produce an information leaflet which would be sent out to letting agents and private landlords. Should the Council be advised of specific addresses then a visit would be made to the address or contact would be made with the landlord in an effort to advise and educate about waste disposal and how it should and should not be done.
- A further comment was made concerning the need for Councillors to support the Street Champions in their wards.
- Officers were advised that the wildflower meadows and set aside land at open spaces were looking lovely.
- The Assistant Director (Operations) reported that the Pepperhill Household Waste Recycling Centre was open and four bookings a month could be made via the Kent County Council website.
- The Scarab road sweepers had a schedule to work through and, with the oncoming Autumn leaves, work would take longer. Therefore a targeted approach would be taken and the Assistant Director (Operations) asked Members to advise of any issues. There was also a sweeping barrow being trialled in a couple of areas.
- Following a question with regard to litter picks, Members were asked to give officers a week's notice. There was also an extra resource at weekends for bag collection as it was best to clear them quickly after a litter pick. The Committee was advised that

alleyway clearance could only take place during the working week as the rubbish was generally more bulky. Privately owned alleyways were not cleared by the Council but if residents wanted to clear an alleyway they could leave the collected waste in an agreed location for collection by the Council. The Assistant Director (Operations) asked Councillors to contact him or the Waste Projects & Compliance Officer to work out details for litter picks etc.

- Waste crews were encouraged to record and report issues on their rounds and an internal WhatsApp group was being trialled that would send a photo of the issue to the appropriate manager to be dealt with.
- The officer confirmed that CCTV had been placed in 2 or 3 locations in the Downs Road area and a Fixed Penalty Notice had been issued in Downs Road. The service was more proactive with regard to enforcement than previously.
- The cleanliness of the town centre after being steam cleaned was favourably commented upon.
- Members were advised that Kent County Council dealt with the roadside weeds on a bi-annual basis.
- Following a suggestion on the use of larger warning signs with regard to fly-tipping especially on main roads, the officer undertook take the idea to the Kent Resource Partnership.
- Following a question about stopping business owners passing off trade waste as household waste, the Assistant Director (Operations) confirmed that officers talked to business owners who did not have trade waste agreements and the enforcement team was also used.

In conclusion, the Chair noted that there would be a report to the next meeting of the Committee on the enforcement programme. In addition, he had noted the significant improvements in street cleanliness in the town centre and congratulated the officers on this achievement.

Resolved that this report be noted.

11. Corporate Performance Report: Quarter 2020/21

Members were presented with an update against the Performance Management Framework as set out within the Council's Corporate Plan, for quarter 1 2020/21 (April to June 2020).

The Chair went through the report page by page and the following comments were made:

PI12 – Percentage of areas with unacceptable levels of littering - The Committee was advised that during the lockdown no littering measurements had been taken. It was noted that a set list of 180 streets from 4 areas with different demographics were monitored each quarter, given a visual inspection and compared with a national grading system – A, B, C and D. A grading of A/B was acceptable, C meant slight littering and D meant very bad levels of litter. 95% of the inspected roads had acceptably low levels of litter.

Resolved that the report be noted.

Close of meeting

The meeting ended at 8.50 pm

