

Agenda Item No: 9
Report To: Cabinet
Date of Meeting: 9 November 2017
Report Title: Mid Kent Joint Waste Partnership; Ashford's Progress
Report Author & Job Title: Mrs Tracey Butler
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Portfolio Holder Cllr. Mrs Clair Bell
Portfolio Holder for: Environment and Land Management



Summary: This report examines Ashford Borough Councils progress in the Mid Kent Joint Waste Partnership and asks Cabinet to agree to continue with the same collection methodology until re-procurement begins in 2019 / 20 and to make some slight adjustments to non-statutory services to cover costs and encourage digital service participation.

Key Decision: NO

Significantly Affected Wards: All

Recommendations: The Cabinet is recommended to:-

- I. Note the positive progress on the contract to date
- II. Agree, that in the life of this contract, Ashford Borough Council will continue with the same collection methodology (subject to no legislative / regulatory changes that indicate to the contrary).
- III. Agree that in 2018 – 19, we will engage with our residents to achieve, as far as is practicable, a future quality household waste collection service our residents demand and continue to understand and support.
- IV. Support adjustments to non-statutory services to cover costs from next financial year and encourage digital service participation.

Policy Overview:

Financial Implications: None above those envisaged on the annual contract uplift

Legal Implications None

Equalities Impact Assessment Not Required because there is no change in collection methodology

Other Material Implications: None

Exempt from Publication: No

Background Papers:

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Introduction and Background

1. Ashford Borough Council partners with Swale Borough Council, Maidstone Borough Council and Kent County Council to form the Mid Kent Joint Waste Partnership. KCC is the waste disposal authority whilst Ashford, Swale and Maidstone are the collection authorities. The contracting partner for kerbside collection is Biffa. This partnership began in 2013, with the aim of increasing household waste recycling and reducing collection and disposal costs to relevant partners.

Current Position

2. The partnership is about to enter Year 5 of a 10 year contract. The Kent Resource Partnership (KRP) End Destination Report demonstrates not only excellent recycling rates for Ashford, exceeding government targets but residual waste largely going to energy recovery (incineration), with less than 2% of waste generated in Ashford going to landfill, (government target of 10%). (Appendix 1)
3. The most current recycling data (currently provisional – awaiting ratification and publication by DEFRA) has placed Ashford top in Kent for the third consecutive year. Our recycling rate has risen from 53.1% to 55%, exceeding rates from our partner authorities. This can be attributed to a number of factors;
 - a. Strong contract management (dedicated staff with an excellent understanding of the contract, who use the performance management tools effectively)
 - b. A sound communication plan (agreed with additional funding by Cabinet in January 2017) and an outstanding in house communications team that support our service.
 - c. Residents who are keen to recycle as much as possible
 - d. Membership of the KRP, that “horizon scans” legislative and public engagement initiatives and opportunities on our behalf
 - e. An engaged contractor
4. Disposal arrangements through KCC continue to present challenges in the form of stringent “contamination sampling” but our communication strategy considers this and pro-actively engages with our residents based on our Cabinet agreed communications plan.
5. In the summer of 2017, an assessment of the efficacy of both the Mid Kent and East Kent waste partnerships was commissioned by the KRP, to inform

the emerging West Kent waste partnership working group and to consider if the benefits predicted to all partners had been realised. The “headlines” appear below.

6. Ashford leads the way in dry mixed recycling but also resident’s participation in our food waste recycling programme is the highest across the partnership. (see Appendix 1)
7. It could be expected that recyclate values would be higher in source segregated collections, rather than co-mingled recycling, which Ashford has. However, due to the reduced market value of paper and card and the on-going uncertainty of end destinations for some recyclate streams (attributable to withdrawal of end market destinations and uncertainty over our future trading relationship with Europe) that predicted cost benefit has not materialised. Consequently, Ashford continues to provide a cost effective, co-mingled waste and recycling service through our current methodology.
8. There are areas for improvement in the Mid Kent partnership that can only realistically be investigated at contract re-negotiation (such as; fleet complexity and lifespan when choosing collection methodology, subsequent choice of containerisation, a methodology that suits topography and demographics, waste infrastructure and processing and end destination markets). However, partnership working is successful for all concerned as it has been a catalyst for a step change in recycling performance and generated savings for both collection and disposal authorities.
9. We are now examining our waste data more closely than ever to ensure we target areas where either recycling is poor or contamination high (or both) to achieve the highest recycling rates possible.
10. Our garden waste (paid for) service continues to grow (just over 14700 customers at Oct 2017). With Cabinet support, it is intended to move the charge from £35 per annum to £40 per annum by 2021 (in line with Mid Kent partners). It is intended that this should support digital delivery for the council in that customers who sign up on-line and use direct debit will benefit by a slightly reduced tariff for the garden waste service;

Non DD 2018/19 = £37.50

DD 2018/19 = £35.00

Non DD 2019/20 = £37.50

DD 2019/20 = £35.00

Non DD 2020/21 = £40.00

DD 2020/21 = £37.50

From 2021 /22 all customers will pay £40 per annum for garden waste services.

Garden waste has a cost to the council in the first year that the customer signs up to the service, as the cost of the bin, the delivery of the bin and the collections service are not recovered from £35.00. However, this service has

the greatest “take up” of all Mid Kent partners. Costs of service provisions are recovered by year 2 and therefore, it is recommended that we continue to provide the service without an initial charge for the bin (consistent with the fact that we do not charge householders for their bins and they remain the property of Ashford Borough Council).

11. Our bulky collection service is currently charged at £24.00 for a 4 item collection. However, our contractor charges us separately for white goods or televisions as they have a separate disposal route. Mid Kent partners (Swale and Maidstone) have moved to charging £24.00 for 4 items where none of them are white goods or televisions. Each item of white goods (or televisions) are charged at £24.00 per item. (Next financial year becoming £25)

Currently, customers can book 4 items for £24, with a maximum of one of those being white goods or TV. However, where that is the case, we are not covering costs, as we are charged twice by our contractor.

Should Members choose to move to the same charging regime as our Mid Kent partners (£24 per 4 items [no white goods], white goods charged individually at £24) concerns have been raised with regards to the possible negative impact this increase could have on flytipping. However, our Mid Kent partners have moved to this charging regime to cover costs without seeing an increase in flytipping.

To mitigate concerns about the possibility of increased flytipping, we are carrying out the following;

Through our current funding to the Kent Resource Partnership, as a County we have agreed to trial fund (for 2 years) an intelligence officer who will be dedicated to the detection of and data sharing on waste crime. This should enable us to track and jointly enforce against persistent and / commercial waste criminals, potentially taking mutli-authority prosecutions and reducing the ability of people to flytip without consequence.

Additionally, we will be exploring the possibility of mobile camera flytipping enforcement with our litter and dog fouling enforcement contractor and the contract arrangement they have with a separate provider to carry out this work.

Implications for the future and Risk Assessment

12. With regards to the suggestion for alterations in charges for garden waste and bulky waste collection, this will bring us into line with our partners in the Mid Kent contract. It is not anticipated that either of these changes will have increase flytipping, however, mitigation has been suggested that should ensure this concern is addressed.
13. In is anticipated, through Brexit negotiations, that most if not all European waste regulations will be incorporated into UK law. However, until this positon has been confirmed, end destination markets for recyclates are proving to be

volatile, affecting income and expenditure modelling for partnerships currently negotiating or re negotiating terms.

14. Government is considering clarifying “producer responsibility” in waste disposal and increasing the target to 75% for recycling packaging waste. Potentially, if you are a supplier of a product that does not reduce your products packaging, you may face a charge for the end disposal of the additionally generated waste. In turn, if introduced, this is likely to have an impact on what elements of the household waste generated waste stream remains directly recyclable (rather than going to energy from waste).
15. Environment Minister, Michael Gove, is exploring a “return and reward” scheme for bottles, most specifically plastics. This has the potential to alter the recoverable recycle stream.
16. Central Government is in the process of putting together a long term environment plan. As part of that process it is anticipated that a recycling target may be introduced for **municipal** waste of 65%, aligning the UK with Europe. Currently, our 50% recycling target is for **household** waste and these are weight based targets. Therefore, it is possible that more waste streams will form part of the target figure. Government are also being lobbied to incorporate carbon and quality targets alongside weight based targets.
17. Some waste partnerships and individual authorities across the country have changed collection methodologies when re procuring, some moving to 3 weekly residual waste collections (e.g.; food waste collected weekly, week 1 all recycling except paper and card collected, week 2 paper and card collected and week 3 residual waste collected). Alternatively, they have moved to smaller residual waste bins and larger recycling bins, slightly altering collection regimes. Changes in containerisation, collection regimes and / or methodologies will all have an additional cost impact for Ashford Borough Council alone should we choose to change our methodology now.
18. We are almost halfway through the term of our waste collection contract. We have the greatest recycling results in the County and have increased our recycling again from 53.1% – 55%. The service is well managed and engagement with residents is pro-active and positive. Ashford is above current government targets for household waste recycling, residual waste is almost exclusively going to energy recovery with some of the lowest diversion rates to landfill in the UK (see Appendix 1). At this point in time, with the uncertainties highlighted above (12-16) it is proposed that we do not change our collection methodology (subject to regulatory or legislative alterations that drive change).

Consultation Planned

19. It is recommended that in financial year 2018 – 2019, we consult with our residents on the service currently provided. We explore how they use the service, what barriers they have to using our services, what they think could be improved, what they would prefer to see from the future service Etc. We will use the results of this survey to inform low / no cost changes that could

improve recycling and ensure, where possible, we consider the wishes and suggestions of our residents in negotiations on future contract provision.

Other Options Considered

20. Change collection methodology or container capacity now to drive potential further improvements in recycling rates. However, there would be a considerable cost implication for re-containerisation, possible vehicle changes and route optimisation not envisaged in the original contract (therefore to be found by Ashford Borough Council).
21. Do not increase bulky waste charges in line with our Mid Kent partners. However, if each booking involved white goods, the service will run at a cost to the council and not just the resident using the service.
22. Do not increase garden waste charges whilst incentivising digital customers. However, garden waste charges for the collection service from the contractor to Ashford Borough Council will increase (due to the price banding structure in the contract and contract uplift each year). The support of Cabinet for the altered pricing structure will support the growth of the garden waste service and incentivise customers to engage with that service through digital interaction.

Reasons for Supporting Option Recommended

23. We have the best recycling rate in the County at 55% (due to be ratified and formally announced by DEFRA shortly), well above government targets. Therefore we do not have to strive for a target that we currently cannot reasonably achieve, inside the terms and conditions of this contract.
24. If we were to make alterations to collection methodology at this stage of the contract through choice there would be considerable financial implications for the Authority, over and above those reasonably expected in the provision of the current contract. This could have a detrimental effect on our medium term financial plan.
25. We will continue to carefully manage the contract, continue to engage with residents through our Communications plan and with the support of Cabinet, proactively engage with residents about the wants and needs for this service in the future, all within budgets currently envisaged to 2019.

26. With Cabinets agreement we will increase charges for bulky waste (to cover costs) and work pro-actively with our litter enforcement contractor and the intelligence officer provided through the KRP to improve our response to, investigations of and where necessary prosecutions of flytipping.
27. Increases in garden waste charges will ensure that costs are covered for service provisions and recovered more quickly from the first point of new customer “sign up”, whilst supporting digital delivery across the council.

Conclusion

28. Cabinet is asked to support the recommendations as they appear on this paper

Portfolio Holder's Views

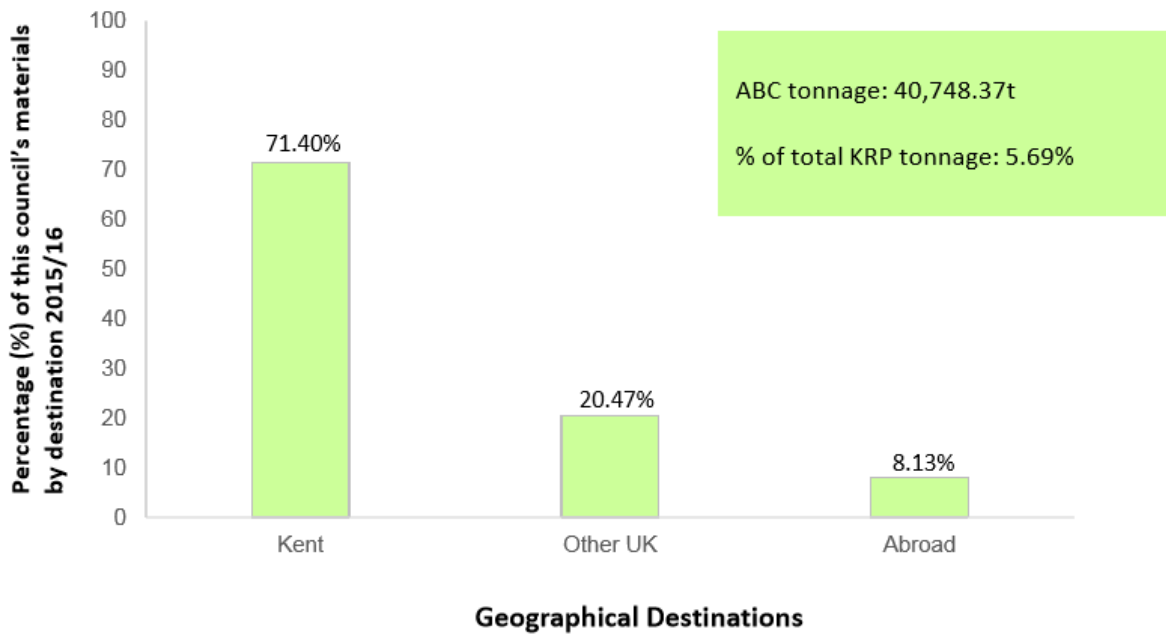
29. We can be justly proud of recycling achievements to date whilst continuing to strive for improvements where possible, through engagement with our residents. Suggested changes to the charging regime for the non-statutory services highlighted above will ensure that we continue to provide a value for money service for those residents who require them.

Contact and Email

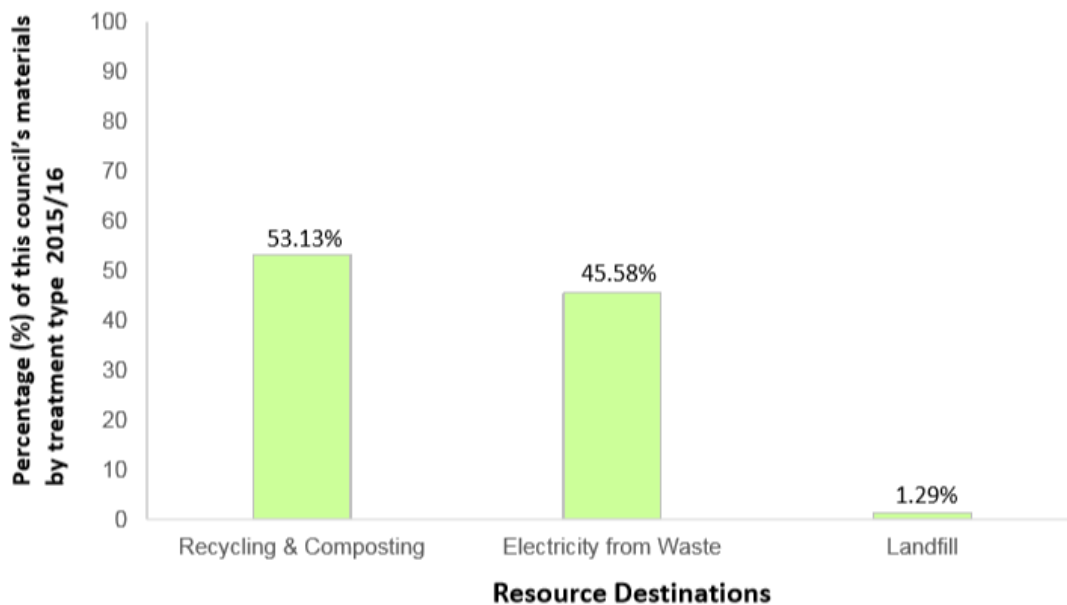
30. Mrs Tracey Butler, Head of Environment and Land Management, tracey.butler@ashford.gov.uk

Appendix 1

Source; Kent Resource Partnership, End Destination report 2015 / 16 (last year of published destination data).

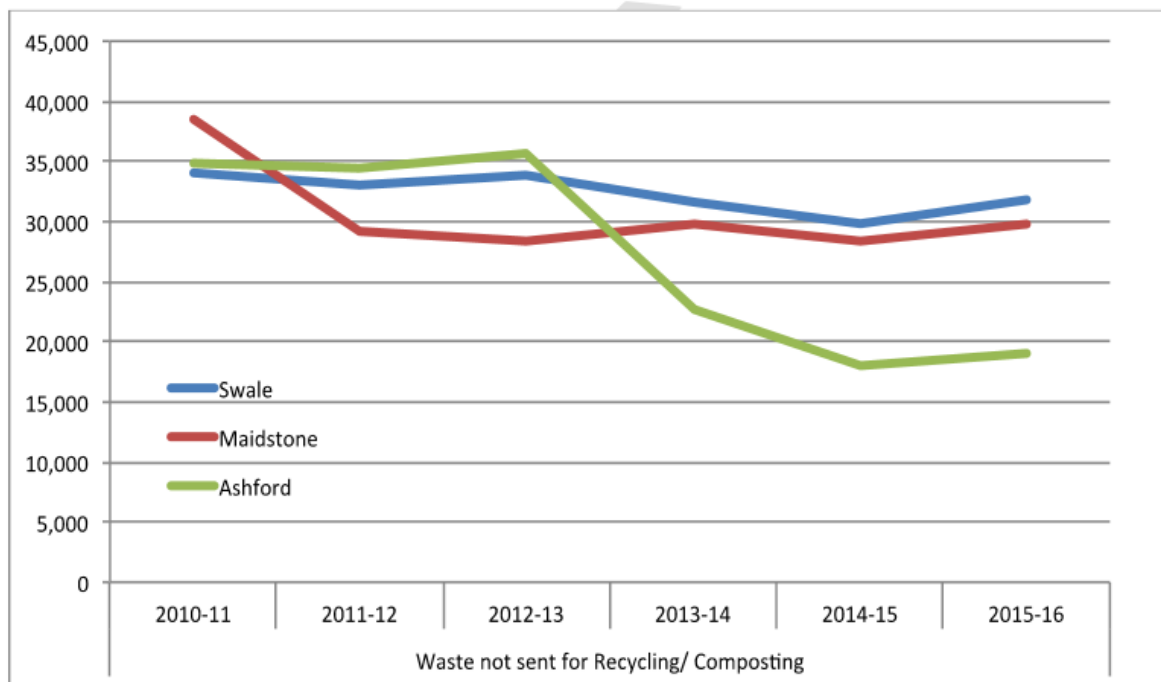


Graph showing where Ashford's waste is sent for processing. Low foreign market destination will reduce impact from China withdrawing end destination markets and possible impact from Brexit. UK reprocessing also ensures that the value of the recycle remains in our economy.

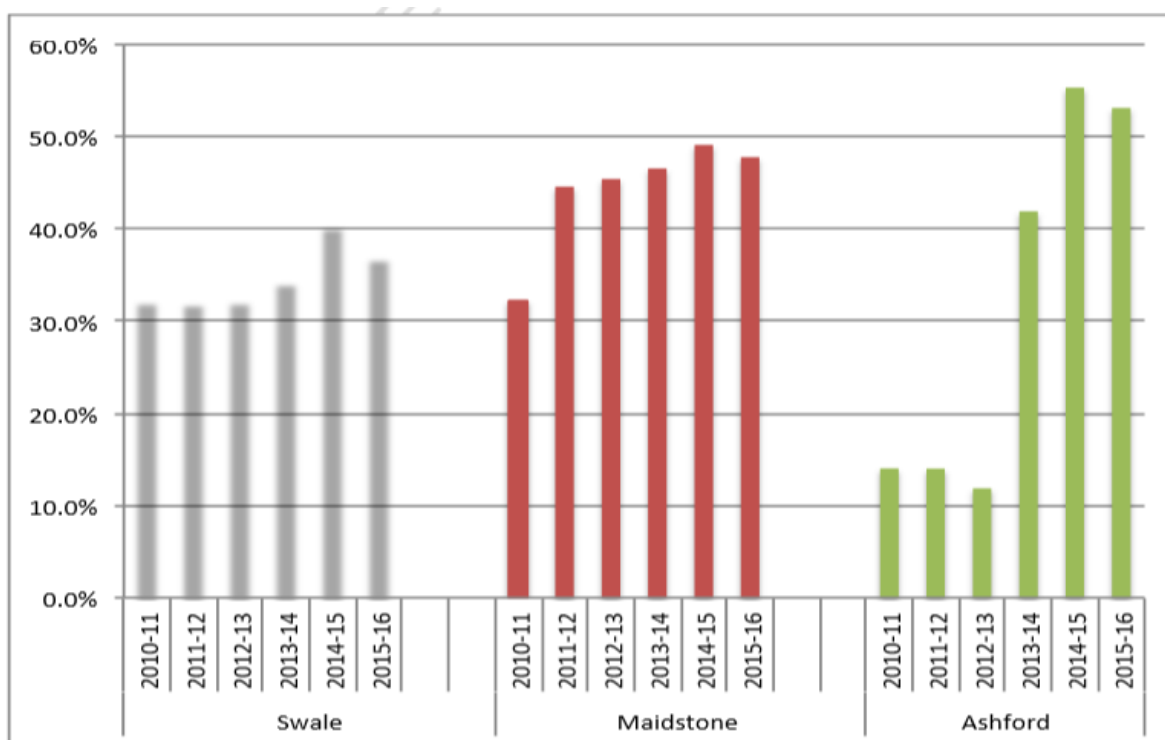


Graph showing Ashford has highest recycling rate in Kent (data from 2015 / 16 report), most of residual waste going for energy recovery in the Energy from Waste plant at Allington and only 1.29% of Ashford's household waste is going to landfill.

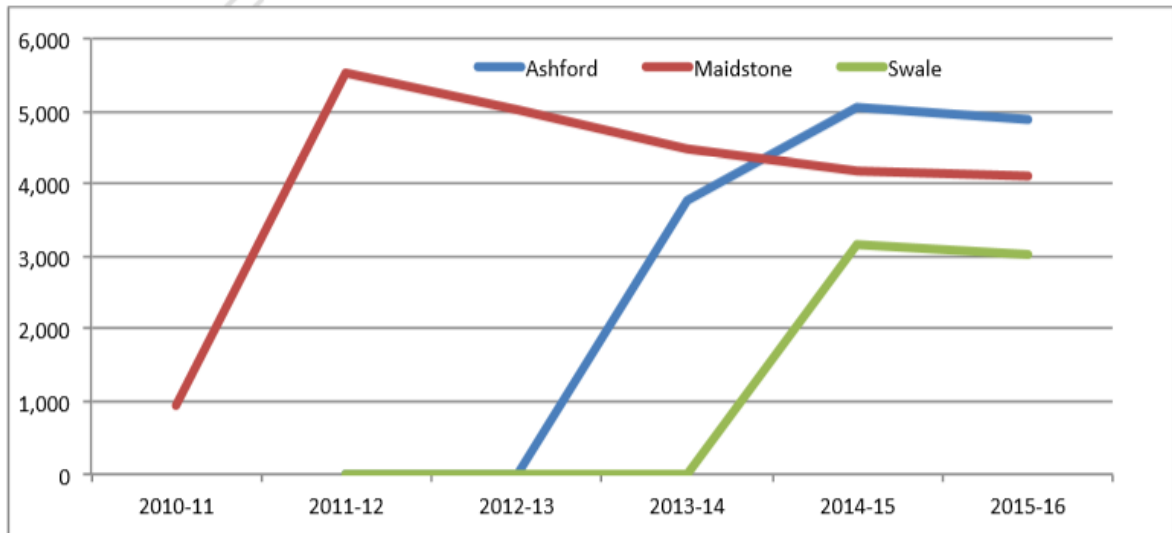
Source; Review of East and Mid Kent Joint Waste Partnerships, Author; Waste Consulting.



Graph showing the considerable reduction in waste not sent for recycling or composting, as compared to our other Mid Kent partners (Maidstone and Swale).



Graph showing increases in recycling performance across the Mid Kent partnership. For Ashford the new service began part way through 2013.



“In terms of Food Waste collections, each authority in the joint contract began collecting this waste stream at different times, with Maidstone already providing a Food Waste collection service prior to the commencement of the contract. Despite only beginning collections in 2013/14 Ashford has consistently outperformed the other Partners in terms of the average weight of kgs they collect from each household per week”