

**Agenda Item No:** 4  
**Report To:** Overview and Scrutiny Committee



**Date:** 21<sup>st</sup> October 2014

**Report Title:** Mid Kent Partnership: Recycling, Waste and Street  
Cleaving Contract: One Year On

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<b>Summary:</b>	This information report provides Members with a high level review of the first year of the new Mid Kent partnership contract which commenced in April 2013. Members are invited to raise any questions, discuss and note the report
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**Key Decision:** NO

**Affected Wards:** All

**Recommendations:** The Overview & Scrutiny Committee are invited to discuss the report, in particular noting the introduction of new policies, and to report accordingly.

**Policy Overview:** N/A

**Financial Implications:** None resulting from this report.

**Risk Assessment** N/A

**Equalities Impact Assessment** None

**Other Material Implications:** Noted in the report if applicable.

**Exemption Clauses:** N/A

**Background Papers:** None

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# Mid Kent Waste and Street Cleansing Contract 2013-2023

## INTRODUCTION

### 1) A new approach to delivering services

- a) Members will recall that Ashford entered into a partnership with Maidstone and Swale Borough Councils and Kent County Council to procure and enter into a new contract for the provision of recycling and waste collection, street cleansing and associated services.
- b) Principal drivers for the new contract and services therein included the need for Ashford to:
  - i) Introduce comprehensive recycling services to move Ashford BC recycling performance from around 12% in 2012/13 (the lowest nationally) to 50% by 2020;
  - ii) Divert biodegradable waste (food and green waste) from landfill or other treatment and disposal in line with national requirements;
  - iii) Introduce efficiencies into street cleansing whilst retaining a focus on high profile and town centre areas; and
  - iv) Make overall savings and provide more expenditure certainty going forward in line with the Councils financial and budget strategy.
- c) The contract was awarded to Biffa Municipal Waste Services and runs from April 2013 to March 2023 (10 years) with an overall core value of £8.62M. The Ashford BC elements of the contract have an annual value of £3.132M (2014/15)

### 2) What's in the Contract?

- a) The principal service components within the contract are:
  - i) Household recycling collections: mixed dry recyclables including paper and card, glass bottles, mixed plastics, steel and aluminium cans/containers.
  - ii) Residual waste collection
  - iii) Food waste collection
  - iv) Clinical waste collection
  - v) Bulky household waste collection (some service cost recovered via customer charges levied)
  - vi) Optional green waste collection (via subscription payment)
  - vii) Street cleansing: Borough wide ( including village and parish/town centres) and including some weed control, dog and litter bins and shelters
- b) Members will be aware that the new contract introduced some major service changes which are summarised below:
  - i) A move to alternate week residual waste collection supported by the introduction of weekly food waste collections;
  - ii) Volume limits on the amounts of residual waste that will be collected in support of b(i);
  - iii) The introduction of a comprehensive alternate week dry recycling service collecting a substantially expanded range of materials; and
  - iv) The provision of wheeled bins for the majority of residents
  - v) A move away from set frequencies for street cleansing to one based upon cleansing according to need against a set standard to be maintained in line with the Environment Protection Act 1990: Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse.

- vi) A resident friendly approach by offering a more bespoke service to cater for differing physical situations, which saw a marked increase in the “Assisted Help Scheme”.

## **THE FIRST YEAR**

### **3) The Contract Mobilisation and Service Roll Out Challenge**

- a) Members will appreciate that the challenges associated with introducing such range of new services, including under a new contract service provider and partnership arrangement, were considerable.
- b) The challenge for Ashford was particularly acute since it was chosen to be the first of the three partner councils to roll out the new services with a target commencement date of July 2013.
  - i) A comprehensive communication and resident education campaign was launched and delivered predominantly in-house supported by Biffa:
    - Service guidance leaflets and letters to all households
    - Face to face, phone support line and community group/event work with harder to reach and disability representative groups
  - ii) Over 200,000 wheeled containers, food bins, food caddies and communal bins had to be obtained and delivered;
  - iii) A new fleet of service vehicles and of a different configuration had to be obtained and put into operation; and
  - iv) Collection rounds and associated arrangements were realigned
- c) At the same time the Ashford responsible service team and management of it was re-organised and slimmed down.

### **4) Service Roll Out: how did we do?**

- a) Taking all matters into account it can be concluded that introduction of the new services went very well.
- b) It is acknowledged that there were challenges associated with customer enquiries and, to some extent the Council had to realign its resources for a period to respond to this.
- c) New collection services of such a scale inevitably take a period to settle down with all residents and collection crews being fully familiar and confident with the services.
- d) It is acknowledged that collection performance fell for a period from July 2013 and an internal audit referred to over 600 missed collections per 100,000 undertaken ( a standard contract performance measure) for weeks in July 2013. This compares to an ongoing contract target of 30 per 100,000 per week across all services (residual, food, recycling, green waste). There is a performance mechanism requirement to rectify justified missed collections within one working day of report.
- e) However, and very importantly to put this in context, even 600 missed collections per 100,000 represents a 99.40% “right first time collection” during this first month (30 per 100,000 represents 99.97%). Also, during such a major change it is almost impossible to clearly determine whether the collection failure was due to contractor error, customer error in not putting out their waste as required or a combination of both.
- f) The Council were relaxed in their policies in relation to side waste, etc. for an initial period providing quality information and education for residents while they familiarised themselves with the new service.

- g) Although it was intended to rollout the Green Waste Collection after the main waste and recycling collection had been well established, the Council instead responded to a strong plea from KALC to roll the Green Waste out at the same time as the new service was introduced.
- h) The launch of the green waste household collection service proved popular and, along with the new recycling and food waste diversion services, made an important contribution to the council's recycling performance – see Section 5.

## 5) Service Performance

- a) Collection performance has settled down and is now consistently delivering at between 30 and 40 per 100,000 missed first time collections. This performance is very high and represents 99.96% “right first time collection.” In context, this needs to be considered in relation to 482,000 collections per month or 5,772,000 collections per annum.
- b) Ashford collection performance remains consistently the best amongst the three partner councils and there have been very few escalated default notices for proven contractor failure to rectify within one working day.
- c) The improvement in Ashford BC recycling performance has been exceptional:
  - i) For 2013/14, which includes only 9 months of the new services, recycling performance rose to 43%
  - ii) For the first full year of the new services (July 2013-June 2014) recycling performance has risen to over 58%
  - iii) The first full year saw a remarkable 60% recycling achieved in Dec 2013 and June 2014
- d) All aspects of the new collection services offered have been successful and supported by Ashford residents with:
  - i) Food waste diverted now averaging over 400 tonnes per month.
  - ii) Green waste contributing over 450 tonnes on average per month from over 10,000 subscribers also providing the council with a valuable new net revenue source.
  - iii) Dry recycling materials contributing over 1000 tonnes per month on average
  - iv) All of the recycling and diversion supported by an overall reduction on the amount of waste Ashford residents are generating in the first place (the waste reduction message).
- e) Customer satisfaction with the major services of waste collection and street cleansing has also significantly improved.
- f) The new contract package is currently saving the Council around £500,000 per year compared with the arrangements in 2012/13.
- g) There is an acknowledgement of the impact of rolling out the major new collection services have had on some elements of street cleansing performance in the first year of the contract. Overall standards have been very well delivered and maintained. However, there have been some issues with establishment of weed growth more than it should have. Highway weed control is also a primary responsibility of Kent County Council or Highways Agency but it does form part of the street cleansing specification especially in higher profile areas. Discussions with KCC are ongoing to address particular areas of high profile and there may be a need to invest some of the savings identified to help improve approach roads in the future.
- h) Extra teams, at Biffa cost, have been deployed since April 2014 to undertake “deep cleanse” of areas where either weeds and/or detritus have built up to a level that was determined as unacceptable. This will continue into the autumn until we are satisfied that all areas are where they should reasonably be.

- i) The new contract includes for a much improved response time to fly-tipping and costs the Council less overall as fly tips up to 2 cubic metres in volume are included in the contract. There has been no increase in fly-tipping that can be linked to the new contract services introduced.
- j) The bulky household waste service has proved popular creating a challenge for Biffa. The collection resource is a shared one across the partnership and the number of bookings has substantially exceeded that forecast when the contract was developed. While customers are using this service it reduces the propensity to fly-tip.
- k) Clinical waste collections have also exceeded those advised at the time of tender and stretched collection resources.
- l) Delivery of garden waste bins has also proved challenging both in securing timely supply and delivery within the 10 working day target. This is, again, mainly due to demand significantly exceeding that advised to Biffa at the time of tendering, for example, Ashford predicted at 7000 with actual exceeding 10,000. This has been a feature across the partnership; however, deductions have been made in line with the contract performance mechanism and 10 day target.
- m) The team have just (August 2014) completed the roll out of recycling and food waste collection services to remaining communal properties. Around 1500 properties were covered including Stanhope Estate, our last major block of properties.
- n) To support the new services, a new set of policies and procedures for recycling and waste collection were developed and agreed by Cabinet in June with full council adoption in July 2014. This is the first time that Ashford has had such policies and will be an important underpinning for the services and the Council going forward. The policies clearly state what residents can expect from the Council and what the Council requires from it's residents to ensure an equality service for all residents.
- o) The team and Biffa are now fully implementing the council's adopted policies on the non collection of residual side waste. If residents are using their recycling containers appropriately the capacity of the residual bin should be ample for most householders. In exceptional circumstances additional containers may be provided, as outlined in the policy. Residents producing higher levels of side waste for recycling will be collected if placed out in suitable containers, again outlined in the policy.

## **LOOKING AHEAD**

### **6) Forward Challenges and Issues**

- a) The first year of the new contract and services has certainly been challenging to all staff and management involved. Sustaining the momentum and excellent overall performance will remain a challenge going forward.
- b) The management and service team is still developing relationships and systems to most efficiently manage the contract and services. This will be assisted by the crucial but successful recruitment of the new Environment and Contract Services Manager post and which commences on 6<sup>th</sup> October.
- c) Ongoing resident communication and engagement will be needed to identify any challenges such as any fall off in recycle quality.
- d) Ashford BC, like all Councils nationally, will have to demonstrate compliance with new EU and UK waste regulations relating to recycle quality and collection systems which are effective from Jan 2015. The necessary work is

being done on this and a report will be considered by Cabinet and onto Full Council before the end of December.

- e) Working with Biffa to get the street cleansing resources and their deployment right is an ongoing process.
- f) The green waste service with over 10,000 customers is believed to have realistic potential to grow and provide a further contribution to recycling performance along with an important increased income stream for the Council.
- g) Many of the Council's litter and dog bins need considering for replacement or review of their location and effectiveness. A major review is to be undertaken in the autumn with an options report to Cabinet in due course.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

### **7) Conclusions**

- a) There can be no question that the changes implemented over the last 12 months have been substantial and presented a number of challenges.
- b) The new services have been, overall, enthusiastically taken up by the residents of Ashford evidenced by the sea change in recycling performance and the way in which they manage their waste.
- c) The new services have led to a substantial improvement in customer satisfaction levels.
- d) The first full year of new services (July 2013 to June 2014) has seen a substantial improvement in Ashford's recycling performance to over 58% This compares with 13% in the year before when Ashford was bottom of the national league tables:
  - i) The 2013/14 annual performance (9 months of new services) at 43% sees Ashford move from the lowest in Kent (13 authorities) to 7<sup>th</sup> place
  - ii) Should the average of 55%+ per month be sustained then Ashford will almost certainly be No 1 in Kent (next best is 47% and static) and likely in the top 15-20% of authorities nationally.
- e) Challenges remain to ensure that recycling quality and performance is sustained going forward.
- f) The green waste service is an undoubted success but with potential to grow.
- g) Recycling material quality will be a critical factor in supporting the retention of co-mingled collections and compliance with EU/UK waste regulations from Jan 2015.
- h) A focus needs to be retained on street cleansing and further progress to fine tune cleansing schedules to better reflect the cleansing needs of each area.
- i) Overall the service and management teams have worked very hard and successfully to introduce the new services.
- j) Ashford BC can be justifiably proud of the progress it has made in such a short time.