

Delegated Decisions report

13 October 2020

Waste and Recycling Collection Consultation

Name of Cabinet Member Councillor Emily Darlington
Cabinet member for Public Realm and Housing
Services

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Exempt / confidential / not for publication No

Council Plan reference Yes - Council Plan 29 Review the
outcome of the wheelie-bin collection trial, protecting weekly residual waste
collections, increasing recycling and reducing waste being sent to landfill.

Wards affected All wards Executive summary

This report proposes that Milton Keynes Council conducts a full consultation with residents in advance of a procurement process for a new waste collection system for the Borough from 2023.

Milton Keynes aspires to be one of the greenest cities and this means we need to review how waste is collected. This is informed by the Sustainability Strategy 2019-2050. To achieve this aim, we need to increase recycling levels and improve the quality of recycling we collect. We aim to consult with residents from November 2020 to January 2021 (See Annex A, Consultation). The focus is on ensuring that we have the right approach for Milton Keynes, working towards being cleaner, greener and safer.

Results from the formal consultation and the Waste Collection Pilot will inform the decision on the procurement of a new service, which will commence from April 2023.

It provides an opportunity to understand what is important for the delivery of waste and recycling services to the residents of Milton Keynes. This information will be used to inform future service decisions on the collection of waste and recycling. It will also provide an opportunity for Milton Keynes Council to understand what it should focus on to help residents recycle more.

It is deemed good practice to consult on any potential changes to waste collection services that could directly affect residents sufficiently in advance of decisions being made.

There are regular surveys undertaken on the current waste collection system with residents and this has been used to make improvements where possible to the current system.

The last formal consultation on waste in the borough took place in 2005.

MKC continues to be one of the top recyclers in the UK. Currently over 20% of the recycling we receive contains the wrong items.

The priorities for waste and recycling in Milton Keynes are focused on;

- Cleaner streets by reducing sack spillage
- Greener by increasing recycling
- Safer by reducing injuries to residents, staff and animals from sacks
- Improving the quality of recycling by separating materials
- Reducing our carbon footprint

A motion (see Annex B) was put forward to Full Council on 17 July 2019, which was referred to Cabinet on 3 September 2019, to explore pilot schemes for waste collection to replace the use of plastic sacks. This included the use of wheeled bins and other waste management solutions that could address the different challenges faced by different estates.

A delegated decision was taken on the 11 February 2020 to proceed with a Waste Collection Pilot to test a revised collection system before a borough wide roll out, to collect data, to review the modelling, operational methods and evaluate resident feedback. The pilot will measure ease of use; recycling rate, contamination, carbon management and resident satisfaction.

The Pilot will commence on the 26 October 2020. Information from the pilot and the formal consultation will be used to inform future decisions on the procurement and delivery of waste and recycling collection in Milton Keynes.

A cross-party working group, chaired by the Cabinet Member for Public Realm, has considered formal consultation options. The consultation questions can be found in

Annex A. The pilot will consider the effectiveness and practicality of introducing a new waste collection method as an alternative to plastic sacks to residents. This will be tested before decisions are taken for the design and delivery of waste collection in 2023 when the existing waste collection contract expires.

In order to make the consultation as accessible to as a wide a range of people as possible, a range of communication methods will be used including, but not exclusive to;

- Video with subtitles explaining the consultation and how people can respond.
- Audio clip to assist people with visual impairment who may not be able to access the video.
- Communicating directly with resident and community groups.
- Working with ward councillors and parishes to help share information.
- Making hard copies of the consultation available with Freepost.
- Website, media release and regular social media reminders.
- Direct contact with chairs and representative groups for people who are older or have disabilities to ensure that all voices are heard.

The consultation will last for twelve weeks and will commence from Monday 2 November 2020 until Sunday 24 January 2021. Responses from the consultation will be collated and will be included for due consideration as part of the delegated decision paper on the future of the waste services anticipated to be in March 2021 for implementation in 2023.

It is important that the consultation takes place whilst decisions on services are still at a formative stage in order to take into consideration any responses before finalising proposals.

1. Decision/s to be made

1.1 That approval is granted to commence a 12 weeks formal consultation, based on the questions in Annex A, to inform the future delivery of the waste and recycling services.

2. Why is the decision needed?

2.1 Milton Keynes has led the way in recycling and was the first local authority to introduce separate kerbside collection of recyclables and the use of recycling boxes on a borough-wide scale. In 1990 the Council commenced a trial by providing red boxes for paper (i.e. 'read' papers – red for paper) and blue boxes for glass, cans and plastic bottles. Initially these were collected by a dedicated vehicle which had separate compartments and the recycling was hand sorted at

the kerbside. The trial was to be rolled out over 3 years; however, as the trial was so well received by residents, in 1992 the decision was made to accelerate the roll-out borough wide and build our own Materials Recovery Facility (MRF).

- 2.2 The last formal consultation on waste in Milton Keynes took place in 2005. As the existing waste contract arrangements come to an end in March 2023, there is an opportunity to redesign how waste and recycling is collected in Milton Keynes. The input from residents into the delivery of future waste and recycling services is vital. The consultation results and the findings from the Waste Collection Pilot could determine a new collection system which will focus on Milton Keynes aspiration to be a green city.
- 2.3 The current waste collection system includes black sacks (provided by the residents) for waste that cannot be recycled (residual waste); clear bags for recycling (60 bags provided annually allowing top ups by an online service); a blue box for glass; and a green 140 litre bin for food and garden waste. There are variations with flats, communal and special kerbside properties.
- 2.4 The Council currently has a high residual waste per household (544kg per household per year with England Local Authorities averaging 543kg) as well as a high waste volume per person (460kg per person per year with England Local Authorities averaging 410kg). The current collection system in sacks means that there is the potential for commercial waste leaks into household stream undetected. The recycling rate is 59.1% which is ranked first out of councils who provide a weekly collection service and 14th out of 364 local authorities. However, the contamination rate in the recycling sacks is currently around 20% and it is a priority for the council to improve quality of recycling inputs.
- 2.5 This delegated decision covers the formal consultation of the waste collection services across the whole borough.
- 2.6 The cross-party working group continues to input and work with council officers to ensure residents are kept informed before, during and after the consultation. This is also a significant opportunity to share messages about improved recycling practices all residents can take. Briefing sessions will be held for all Councillors and Parish and Town Councils during the consultation period.
- 2.7 Results of the formal consultation will be collated and evaluated during February 2021. They will form part of the evidence and report put forward to delegated decision in March 2021 for the delivery of a new waste and recycling contract to commence in 2023.

3. Implications of the decision

Financial	Yes	Human rights, equalities, diversity	Yes
Legal	Yes	Policies or Council Plan	Yes
Communication	Yes	Procurement	Yes
Energy Efficiency	Yes	Workforce	Yes

a) Financial implications

The anticipated cost of the consultation, which includes the cost of the video, postage, posters, communications and print of hard copies of the consultation is £5,000. This will be funded from the revenue allocated to the waste collection pilot by Cabinet in the 2020/21 budget.

b) Legal implications

There may be a requirement in common law to carry out a public consultation on large-scale changes to waste collection. This is part of the Council's overriding duty to act fairly in the exercise of its public functions. Examples of the types of proposals that could give rise to a public consultation might include:

- (a) A change in frequency of collections.
- (b) A change in collection receptacles.
- (c) A change in materials to be placed in receptacles.
- (d) A change in collection of recyclable waste.

Milton Keynes Council has chosen to consult at this time to adhere to some general key principles:

- Consult while proposals are at a formative stage – No decisions have yet been made.
- Provide enough detail of proposals to enable a response – Waste collection pilot and background papers on website to accompany Waste and Recycling Consultation.
- Adequate time for people to make a response – 12 weeks consultation period.
- Take in to account any responses in finalising proposals – Evaluation and delegated decision report anticipated to be around March 2021.

c) Other implications

- *Communication*: A dedicated communications plan has been prepared with support and guidance from the cross-party working group.
- *Human rights, equalities, diversity*: An equalities impact assessment has been carried out on consultation methods to ensure no groups are disadvantaged.

4. Alternatives

4.1 Option 1 - Do nothing. If Milton Keynes chooses not to consult on potential changes to waste and recycling, it would potentially be open to risk of legal challenge not be able to make any significant changes to contract or collection arrangements. It would remain one of the 16% of councils left in England that do not use wheeled bins. It would miss the opportunity to increase recycling rates, improve the quality of recycling, make the streets cleaner and keep residents, staff and animals safer by reducing the current level of sack injuries.

4.2 Option 2 - Dedicated/ target consultation to different socioeconomic groups, which may not meet legal consultation requirements. It may also leave a gap in the borough wide collection of views and data capture.

4.3 Option 3 - Formal consultation on the future of waste and recycling (Preferred option). This recommended option allows for a stepped change. Without a formal consultation process on future options that will directly affect residents, it would not be possible to implement large scale change. This provides the opportunity to capture resident views and feedback that can be used to inform the future of waste and recycling collections from 2023.

5. Timetable for implementation

Consultation: November 2020-January 2021

Evaluation: February 2021

Feedback DD: March 2021

List of annexes

Annex A – Waste Collection Consultation

Annex B – Waste Collection Pilot Principles

List of background papers
Waste Collection Pilot Delegated Decision Report 11 February 2020