

Waste Service Provision during Covid-19

update for on the situation regarding the KCC Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) and waste operations, in response to Covid19

Following the Prime Minister's announcement on 23 March that people must stay at home, the decision was taken close all KCC's 18 HWRCs until further notice. We know that HWRCs are a much-valued service for Kent residents and the decision to close them was not taken lightly. However, Government guidance is that people should stay at home and only leave the house for one of four reasons:

1. Shopping for basic necessities, for example food and medicine, which must be as infrequent as possible
2. One form of exercise a day, for example a run, walk, or cycle - alone or with members of your household
3. Any medical need, or to provide care or to help a vulnerable person
4. Travelling to and from work, but only where this absolutely cannot be done from home.

KCC had already been considering closure as, with more people away from work, there had been a surge in use of the HWRCs with many people taking the opportunity of being at home to have a clear out. It was proving impossible to maintain social distancing for either users of the HWRCs or staff and longer queues were causing safety problems on the highway.

The Council was also aware of the difficulties facing the Districts/Boroughs in maintaining a full kerbside waste and recycling service whilst coping with staff shortages from sickness and self-isolation. KCC has therefore redeployed their HWRC staff to assist with these collections and to ensure KCC's Waste Transfer Stations¹ remain open to receive household waste. This must be the priority as any interruption to this service would have an immediate impact on Public Health. All KCC's Waste Transfer Stations and onward disposal and processing contractors continue to work as normal, indeed many have offered to be more flexible and offer further operational support to district and borough councils. Furthermore, those KCC Waste Transfer Stations that offer a trade waste disposal service will continue to do so, in order to support small businesses in this difficult time.

1 Co-located at 6 of the HWRCs are Waste Transfer Stations (WTSs) for the deposit and bulk loading of waste materials collected and delivered by the District and Borough Councils of Kent, as well as trade waste from businesses at 4 of the WTSs.

Kerbside collections of clinical waste² will also continue to be supported and will be prioritised above all other services should the need arise.

Concerns have been raised that the HWRC closures and the suspension by some Districts/Boroughs of bulky waste and garden waste collections will lead to an increase in flytipping. Our position remains clear that the vast majority of residents are law abiding and keen to dispose of their waste appropriately. Officers are in daily contact with all District & Borough officers and meet weekly (remotely of course), the consequence of curtailing any routine service is well understood and all Authorities are committed to employ best endeavours, mutual assistance and the transference of personnel.

KCC together with the District/ Borough councils will continue the communications campaign about the need for residents to protect themselves from illegal waste carriers who target householders with cheap rates to take their rubbish away and then fly tip it.

Where possible and safe to do so, all Councils will continue to clear flytipping and indeed continue to investigate and take necessary enforcement action. We will also be communicating the option of hiring a skip or hippobag from one of the many reputable Kent waste businesses. Indeed, skip

providers have reported huge demands for their services to the extent that they are operating near capacity. Whilst the Districts/Borough councils take the lead on communications about kerbside collections, KCC will be supporting them in promoting messages about the need to continue recycling at the kerbside, not to overfill bins and to clean handles to help reduce risk the spread of Covid19.

KCC continues to work with their District/ Borough council colleagues, KCC's Waste Transfer Station contractors and our onward processing contractors to ensure that together KCC can continue to deliver the most comprehensive kerbside waste collection and disposal service that we possibly can in these unprecedented times.

KCC will reopen the HWRCs just as soon as Government guidance and staffing levels allow this to be done.

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