

Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council - Recycling Collections

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Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council has today agreed an action plan to tackle on-going problems with household waste collection.

Following a three-hour emergency meeting yesterday with contractor, Urbaser, council leaders have agreed a raft of measures to resolve issues with missed bin collections that have persisted since new recycling arrangements were introduced in September 2019. The measures include:

1. Doubling capacity with 20 additional refuse trucks and 50 more collection staff to be deployed
2. Switching to new trucks which focus on collecting either mixed recycling or food waste, not both
3. Re-planning and reducing the size of some collection rounds to ensure they are completed
4. Deploying additional inspectors at depots and on rounds to monitor performance
5. Reducing Urbaser's reliance on agency staff in favour of more permanent staff
6. Creating a rapid response teams to fix faults on refuse vehicles
7. Improving data handling to help identify and respond to repeatedly missed 'hot-spots'
8. Increase temporary council staffing to deal with complaints and reports of missed bins

The meeting identified a key issue affecting collections was new-style combination recycling trucks designed to collect both mixed recycling (glass, plastic, metal) with a separate compartment for food waste. Due to the higher than anticipated volume of waste being collected, the trucks were often filling up before a round was completed, resulting in delays to collections for many homes. These trucks are being replaced with single-purpose vehicles with greater capacity.

Nicolas Heslop, Leader of Tonbridge and Malling Council, said: "I would like to thank the team at Urbaser for their positive response to the serious concerns we raised on this issue. We are determined to sort the problems and are moving quickly to implement these plans the coming days. On behalf of the council, I would like to apologise to residents who have had problems with bin collections but also to assure them that there will be no let-up in our response until a reliable service is being delivered."