

East Herts Council Report

Executive

Date of Meeting: 24 November 2020

Report by: Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability

Report title: Garden Waste Policy

Ward(s) affected: ALL

Summary:

This report seeks to approve the key policies, principles and service standards for the charged garden waste service that was approved by Council on 29 January 2020 as part of the council's Medium Term Financial Plan.

RECOMMENDATIONS for EXECUTIVE:

- A) Approve the key principles of a chargeable garden waste scheme as highlighted in paragraph 1 for the purpose of public consultation prior to a decision on implementation by Council

1.0 Proposal(s)

- 1.1 To agree the following key principles of chargeable garden waste service:
- The cessation of the free organic waste collection service.
 - The introduction of an annual charge for garden waste collections of £50.

A reduced 'early bird' direct debit rate at £45, for the first year only, to help anticipate resource requirements and reduce future year administration

- of the service.
- The option of purchasing up to 3 garden waste bins for collection

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The shared waste service was formed in December 2017 in advance of the start of the shared waste contract with North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC).
- 2.2 At the time the shared service was formed each authority had an opportunity to introduce a charged garden waste collection service. At this time East Herts District Council (EHDC) decided to maintain a free garden waste collection service.
- 2.3 In January 2020, the option for charging for a garden waste service was approved at Council as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan. It identified an income of £400,000 for 2021. This report therefore seeks to determine the charging policy and other terms and conditions of the service.
- 2.4 East Herts Council as Waste Collection Authority (WCA) has a legal duty under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 (EPA) to make arrangements for the collection of household waste and commercial waste where requested by the occupier of a premises.
- 2.5 Under the Controlled Waste Regulations for some waste that is considered household waste, the local authority may recover a reasonable charge for collection. The Council already has charges for bulky waste collection.
- 2.6 A number of local authorities in Hertfordshire already charge for garden waste, these include North Hertfordshire District Council, Welwyn Hatfield Borough

Council, Watford, Broxbourne Borough Council and Three Rivers District Council.

- 2.7 Charges for East Herts have been determined based on contract costs and anticipated administrative costs. Examples of charges from neighbouring authorities are in the table below.

	Standard Charge	Direct Debit Charge (if different)
Broxbourne	£42	£34
Harlow	£42	
North Hertfordshire	£40	
Uttlesford	£46	
Three Rivers	£45	£40
Watford	£45	£40
Welwyn Hatfield	£35	

- 2.8 The WRAP waste data portal indicates that of the 406 councils which operate a garden waste collection service, 237 (58%) of these are chargeable.
- 2.9 The shared service client team has taken learning points from Councils already operating charged garden waste collection services and will be producing an FAQ document which will be available on the EHDC website. This will be regularly updated with information on the new service. A draft FAQ document can be found in Appendix A.

Implementation

- 2.10 The existing organic waste collection service would cease

on 1st April 2021 and food waste would be diverted to the residual bin.

- 2.11 It is recommended that the initial sign up to a charged garden waste collection service is sought over a short period of time, beginning on 1st February with a high impact communications campaign. This gives just over seven weeks to implement the new service and will help ensure all residents are aware and prepared for the change.
- 2.12 Offering a reduced rate cost for early sign up by direct debit in the first year during this intense period of advertising will allow for the necessary time needed to schedule collections and plan routes for collection vehicles. A reduced rate of £45 (on the proposed full annual cost of £50) is proposed up to 15th March 2021. This reduced rate will be applicable in the first year only.
- 2.13 Sign up will still be possible after this date at the full charge of £50 and operational resources will be allocated and routes mapped based on anticipated trends after the early sign up.
- 2.14 The council's financial management system is currently not set up to easily facilitate the payments for large numbers of households via direct debit therefore managing this through a separate fully auditable IT system via the contractor is the preferred solution. This will in turn reduce the administrative burden and cost of the client team administrating services through the same web portal as the shared service.
- 2.15 Terms and conditions will be aligned as far as is reasonably practicable with those of the shared service to ensure consistency in messages delivered by the client team. Key terms and conditions include:-
 - The service is a garden waste only service, not a

- mixed organics service (i.e. garden and food waste).
- A 14 day cooling off period and lead in time from sign up to service start.
- The garden waste service will operate on a fixed year basis from 1st April each year, to 31st March the following year.
- Residents will be allowed to purchase up to three garden waste fortnightly collections for the year.
- Payment will be by direct debit, credit or debit card only.
- Bins will be emptied fortnightly in the same week as the recycling bin, in line with other bin collection requirements.
- Garden waste collections are for household waste only, commercial garden waste will not be collected.
- Side waste will not be accepted, with the exception of real Christmas trees.
- Bin stickers will be issued to residents who purchase the service.

2.16 A copy of the full draft terms and conditions can be found in Appendix B.

2.17 The client team will promote home composting including the opportunities for home composting of food waste through a number of initiatives and incentives.

2.18 Additional temporary resources will be required in the client team and in the customer service team to administer the sign up period each year, these have been costed into the proposals, but will be reviewed annually.

2.19 For the first 6 months of the roll out the Council will not collect brown bins of those residents who do not sign up to the service. It is anticipated that residents may sign up at a later date.

2.20 The charge will not be prorated as scale back of resources is not possible.

3.0 Reason(s)

- 3.1 The agreed budget for 2021 identifies an income for garden waste of £400,000 for 2021/22.
- 3.2 A reduced 'early bird' introductory price for the new garden waste service will ensure levels of take up can be assessed in sufficient time to ensure adequate assets and resources are available to residents who request the service.
- 3.3 The use of direct debit for the 'early bird' sign up will assist with the renewal of subscriptions each year.

4.0 Alternative options considered

- 4.1 The cessation of the organic waste collection service only; was considered in order to meet the budget position for 2021/22, however this is not recommended due to the additional burden this is likely to have on residual waste collections and Household Waste Recycling Centres.

5.0 Risks

- 5.1 There is a risk that fewer residents than anticipated sign up to the charged garden waste service and choose to home compost or dispose of garden waste by other means. This could reduce the anticipated income offsetting service costs.
- 5.2 There is a risk of increased complaints with the implementation of the charged service which may impact on the reputation of the council.

6.0 Implications/Consultations

- 6.1 The Chief Finance Officer at EHC and the Executive Member and Financial Sustainability have been consulted.

- 6.2 A public consultation was undertaken in 2017; it is not anticipated that the public opinion in relation to charged services in the district has changed significantly. A further public consultation will take place in relation to the roll out of the charged service. Draft questions can be found in Appendix C.
- 6.3 Financial modelling for the charged garden waste service has been undertaken based on predictions around the take up of services by residents. 20% of residents with gardens indicated in the public consultation in 2017 that they would use the service. However information gained from actual take up from neighbouring authorities indicates that EHC can expect sign up to be between 40% and 50% of households with gardens. The overall scheme with a take up of 45% of all households and including an early direct debit discount should result in a net reduction in cost of £700,000.
- 6.4 There are no capital implications associated with this report. A stock of bins will be maintained to manage replacement bins.
- 6.5 The recycling rate for the authority could reduce. This is dependent on take up but is anticipated to be between 4% and 8% based on the reductions seen at other local authorities and a take up of 40%.

Community Safety

No

Data Protection

Yes – Customer data will be obtained for the purpose of performing the services, taking payment and communicating the renewal of the subscription service.

Equalities

Yes – not offering cash and cheque as a means of payment may

impact on elderly residents more than other some others. A full EqIA will be undertaken following the public consultation.

Environmental Sustainability

Yes - Improved efficiency of services by only routing vehicles where collections are required. Home composting to discourage food to landfill and road map in place for weekly food waste collection in 2023.

Financial

Yes - Net positive financial impact as mentioned in paragraph 6.3

Health and Safety

No

Human Resources

Yes- The introduction of new services requires additional front end call handling and back office administration.

Human Rights

No

Legal

No

Specific Wards

No

7.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

Appendix A – Draft FAQs

Appendix B – Draft Terms and Conditions

Appendix C – Draft consultation questions

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