

Cheltenham Borough Council
Officer decision – 8 January 2019
Garden Waste Charges

Accountable member	Councillor Chris Coleman, Cabinet Member Clean and Green Environment
Accountable officer	Tim Atkins, Managing Director, place and growth
Ward(s) affected	All
Key/Significant Decision	No
Executive summary	<p>On 4 December 2018, Cabinet approved a report to increase garden waste charges and reduce the number of collections per year subject to public consultation and delegated authority to the MD Place and Growth to undertake appropriate consultation and to decide whether or not to implement the proposals after careful consideration of representations made</p> <p>Following a public consultation exercised carried out between 19 December 2018 and 6 January 2019, from February 2019, the MD Place and Growth has decided that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the garden waste collection charge will be increased from £42/year to £45/year per bin to reflect the increased cost of running the service such as the cost of diesel and increase in living wage. • Existing customers who renew their subscription ahead of their annual renewal date, and new customers who take advantage of the 'spring offer' discount, will continue to benefit from the £3/year per bin 'prompt payment' discount or 'spring offer' as above and will see an increase of £3/year per bin whilst customers who do not take advantage of the discounts will see a £6/year rise in the cost of subscription per bin. • the number of collections of garden waste per customer per year will be reduced by 2 resulting in no garden waste collections for 4 weeks over the Christmas/New Year. Customers will be advised each year, subject to how Christmas falls, which collections will be suspended. Historically garden waste collections have been lighter over the Christmas/New Year period minimising inconvenience to customers. Suspending 2 collections (over 4 weeks) at this time of year when severe weather (snow) is more likely to cause service disruption, will enable the vehicles and crews to be used on other services where collections are heavier over Christmas and New Year, particularly residual waste (refuse), and also catch up collections are required due to not working bank holidays. • Garden waste collections will be suspended weeks commencing: 23 December 2019, 30 December 2019, 6 January 2020, 13 January 2020. If this change is implemented, normal collections will resume Monday 20 January 2020.
Decision	That following the results of public consultation which support the decision being taken, as set out in the report, the following be

implemented from 1 February 2019:

- 1. An increase in the garden waste collection charge from £42/year to £45/year per bin;**
- 2. The retention of a prompt payment discount at £3 per bin for households renewing their subscription ahead of their annual renewal date;**
- 3. The retention of a spring offer discount at £3 per bin for new customers who subscribe to the garden waste collection service during the period 1st February 2019 to 31st May 2019**
- 4. Reduction in the number of garden waste collections over the Christmas/New Year period by 2 collections each year commencing 23 December 2019, 30 December 2019, 6 January 2020, 13 January 2020. Normal collections will resume Monday 20 January 2020.**

Financial implications	<p>As detailed in section 2 to this report. The proposed changes to the fee structure is expected to generate additional income of £50,000 per annum, based on the volume of take up of the service as at 30th September 2018. This income will offset the additional cost of extra vehicle and crew costs incurred through the increased volume of activity.</p> <p>Contact officer: Paul Jones, Executive Director Finance and Assets paul.jones@cheltenham.gov.uk 01242 264365</p>
Legal implications	<p>None other than the legal implications set out in the cabinet report of 4th December 2018.</p> <p>Contact officer: Shirin Wotherspoon, Head of Law (Commercial), OneLegal shirin.wotherspoon@tewkesbury.gov.uk 01684 272017</p>
HR implications (including learning and organisational development)	<p>None as a direct result of this report.</p> <p>Contact officer: Clare Jones, Clare.Jones@cheltenham.gov.uk, HR Business Partner West 01242264364</p>
Key risks	<p><i>Please refer to Appendix 1 of this report</i></p>
Corporate and community plan Implications	<p>The garden waste collection service supports the Authority's corporate outcome: Cheltenham's environmental quality and heritage is protected, <i>maintained and enhanced</i>.</p>

Environmental and climate change implications	The Authority's garden waste collection service supports the environment by potentially diverting organic waste from landfill, thereby saving the cost of landfill tax and the associated production of methane and leachate. Residents who choose not to participate in the scheme can use the county council site at Wingmoor Farm
Property/Asset Implications	<i>None as a direct result of this report.</i> Contact officer: Garrie.Dowling@cheltenham.gov.uk

1. Background

- 1.1** The Authority's garden waste collections service began in February 2011. Since 31 March 2013 the number of garden waste bins collected under the scheme has seen a gross increase of around 1,500 bins per year. Retention rates have remained high at around 95%, reflecting general satisfaction with the service and the net take up of the service has been between 800-1000 bins per year in the earlier years, reducing to 530 in 2017/2018. The actual total number of bins collected has increased from 12,781 as at 31 March 2013 to 17,498 at 30 September 2018.
- 1.2** Since February 2011, the charge for collecting garden waste has increased on only three occasions; from £36 a year to £37 a year in February 2014, from £37 a year to £38 a year in February 2015 and from £38 a year to £42 a year in February 2017. Since the start, the Authority has offered a £2 per year early bird discount for existing customers who renew their subscription ahead of their annual renewal date (a prompt payment discount) as well as a £2 'spring offer' discount for new bin applications, if customers subscribe between the period 1 February to 31 May. In February 2017, the Authority increased both the prompt payment discount and the spring offer to £3 per bin.
- 1.3** Following the cabinet report on 4 December 2018 and the public consultation exercise which took place between 19 December 2018 and 6 January 2019, the Authority's garden waste collection charge will be increased from £42 per year to £45 per year from 1 February 2019 and officers will be instructed to make the necessary arrangements to implement this increase. The Authority will retain the £3 prompt payment discount, along with the £3 spring offer discount. This will mean that existing customers who renew their subscription ahead of their annual renewal date, and new customers who take advantage of the spring offer discount, will benefit from a £3 discount per bin but will also see a £3 increase in the 2019 subscription per bin, whilst customers who do not take advantage of the discount will see a £6 per bin rise in the cost of subscription.

2. Reasons for recommendations

- 2.1** The Authority has not increased the cost of garden waste subscriptions since February 2017 and in response to rising service costs such as an increase in fuel (diesel) and general inflation it is necessary to increase the price of garden waste subscriptions to help fund the cost of collection whilst also reflecting the impact of inflation on the service. It is estimated that the impact of increasing charges will increase income by approximately £50,000 per year, which is aimed to offset the additional costs associated with the service.
- 2.2** The increasing number of customers subscribing to the garden waste service requires an additional vehicle and crew for 9 months of the year. The increase in charges for the service will also help offset these additional year on year costs for the authority by an estimated £50,000 per year additional income.
- 2.3** The increase in charges for the garden waste collection service will bring this Authority closer in line with our neighbouring Authority, Tewkesbury Borough Council, which had charged £45 per year for their garden waste collection service (albeit without any discount) but have now agreed an increase in charges to £48.50 for 2019/20.
- 2.4** During the winter of 2017 and the early part of 2018, severe weather (snow) caused service disruption which was more difficult to manage at this time of year as a result of the adjusted schedule of collections already in place due to the Christmas and New Year bank holidays and therefore the need to schedule catch up Saturday collections.
- 2.5** A reduction in the number of garden waste collections per year by 2 per customer will enable this resource (vehicle and crew) to be utilised to assist seasonal catch up collections or catch up collections required as a result of suspending services due to severe weather (snow) improving

the overall waste and recycling service provided to customers at this time of year.

- 2.6** From the public consultation carried out between 19 December 2018 and 6 January 2019 which supports the increased charges and reduced collections over the Christmas and New Year period, 54.3% of respondents said no to an increase **above** £1.75 per collection (the proposed increase to £45 per year reduced by the £3 prompt payment/spring discount most customers choose to take up and will therefore pay £42 per year) however 45.7% said either yes to a higher charge but didn't know how much more (13.1%); yes to paying £2 per collection (16.3%); didn't know (13.1%) and the remainder (3.2%) yes to paying up to £2.50 per collection.
- 2.7** The increased cost of the service and the impact of this on the council's budget has been considered and balanced with the views from the public, which are consistent with the decision being recommended even if one assumes that a proportion of the 54.3% of the respondents misunderstood and thought they were saying no to any increase in garden waste charges above the current £42 per year rather than the proposed £45 per year retaining the £3 prompt payment/spring discount (set out in the consultation as £1.75 per collection with the early bird discount – 24 collections @ £1.75 per collection = £42 with the early bird discount). I am therefore satisfied that it is reasonable to increase garden waste charges and retain the prompt payment/spring discount of £3 per year and that the decision, which is consistent with the results of the public consultation, is in line with that proposed in the recommendations contained within the cabinet report dated 4 December 2018 and should be implemented with effect from 1 February 2019 to help cover the cost of providing the service.
- 2.8** I recommend members consider the results of the public consultation prior to any further increases in charges for future years and that garden waste charges are considered for inclusion in the consultation planned later in the year.
- 2.9** Whilst 56.2% of those who responded to the public consultation survey said no to a November to January suspension of garden waste collections, overwhelmingly 72.1% of those who responded supported the shorter suspension of garden waste collections over the Christmas/New Year period therefore I am satisfied that a reduction of 2 collections per year per customer is appropriate and should be implemented with effect from December 2019.implemented with effect from December 2019.

3. Alternative options considered

- 3.1** That the Authority does not increase the charges for the garden waste collection service. This has been rejected on the basis that there is a requirement to support the funding of the existing garden waste service and any additional costs associated with waste and recycling service disruption as a result of severe weather (snow) over the Christmas/New Year period.
- 3.2** That the Authority either leaves the number of collections the same but continues to risk greater service disruption to residents given the increasing frequency of severe weather over the Christmas/New Year period which is not considered acceptable, or it suspends the garden waste service over the winter period, i.e. 3 months. This would further reduce the service offered to customers bringing it in line with other local authorities. Given the winter is not the growing season, most customers should not be greatly inconvenienced by a 3 month suspension in collections however the financial saving would be greater and could be used to either improve waste and recycling services overall or offset the cost of the garden waste service. This option has been rejected at this point in time and the consultation responses support this but may be reconsidered in future years.

4. Consultation and feedback

- 4.1 In advance of the October 2017 service change, the Authority undertook an online consultation exercise with Cheltenham residents to understand which type of waste and recycling service they would prefer to receive. As part of the consultation exercise the Authority also asked how residents would prefer to pay for their new waste and recycling service. Of the four options provided: closing the Household Recycling Centre; increasing charges for garden waste collection; closing the recycling banks; or increasing the Authority's other fees and charges, a significant proportion of residents who took part in the consultation (i.e. 1913 out of 3092 – 62%) chose increasing the garden waste charges as their first or second preferred option. Whilst this does show a preference for increasing garden waste collection charges over some of the other options given, it should be noted that it is not known whether those who took part in this consultation were also users of the garden waste collection service.
- 4.2 In practice, majority of customers will look to take advantage of the £3 per year discount, thereby ensuring that the charge for the majority of customers will be £42 per year rather than the pre-discounted charge of £45 per bin per year.
- 4.3 Following the cabinet report approved on 4 December 2018, a public consultation exercise was undertaken between 19 December 2018 and 6 January 2019. Whilst there were some concerns raised about running a public consultation over the Christmas/New Year period, the number of responses received confirms that these concerns were unfounded.
- 4.4 The on line public consultation exercise carried out between 19 December 2018 to 6 January 2019 had a better response rate than the previous consultation for the service review carried out in 2016 using the same method with 4257 responses received prior to inclusion of paper survey responses. Paper copies were available at the household recycling centre in Swindon Road and also in reception areas around the borough.
- 4.5 From the public consultation carried out between 19 December 2018 and 6 January 2019, 54.3% of respondents said no to an increase **above** £1.75 per collection (the proposed increase to £45 per year reduced by the £3 prompt payment/spring discount most customers choose to take up and will therefore pay £42 per year) however a total of 45.7% said either yes to a higher charge but didn't know how much more (13.1%); yes to paying £2 per collection (16.3%); didn't know (13.1%) and the remainder (3.2%) yes to paying up to £2.50 per collection.
- 4.6 Whilst 56.2% of those who responded to the public consultation survey said no to a November to January suspension of garden waste collections, overwhelmingly 72.1% of those who responded supported the shorter suspension of garden waste collections over the Christmas/New Year period.
- 4.7 Further consultation is planned for later in the year over a longer time period, and following feedback from some residents, it is important that we endeavour to reach as many households as possible within available budget.

5. Performance management –monitoring and review

- 5.1 Performance in terms of take-up and income generated will continue to be monitored monthly/quarterly as part of the CBC-Ubico performance monitoring arrangements. Outcomes will be used to inform the thinking on any possible changes to the charges in the future.
- 5.2 As with any changes in service provision, it will be necessary to ensure good communication with customers regarding the suspension of garden waste collections over the Christmas/New Year period and feedback from customers will be monitored by customer services.

Report author	Contact officer: Tim Atkins MD Place and Growth
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Appendices	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Cabinet report dated 4 December 20182. Public consultation survey results
Background information	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1.

Risk Assessment

Appendix 1

The risk				Original risk score (impact x likelihood)			Managing risk				
Risk ref.	Risk description	Risk Owner	Date raised	Impact 1-5	Likelihood 1-6	Score	Control	Action	Deadline	Responsible officer	Transferred to risk register
	If the decision is challenged it will be subject to judicial review	Tim Atkins	8/1/2019	2	1	2	Accept	Public consultation has been conducted and the results reviewed prior to decision making.		Tim Atkins	
	If the proposed increase in charge to the garden waste collection service is not agreed, then the Authority may be unable to meet its requirement to generate an additional £50,000/year to support service provision and cover the cost of inflation. In addition, any service disruption as a result of severe weather may further increase service costs if the number of garden waste collections is not reduced by 2 over the Christmas/New Year period.	Karen Watson	22/11/2018	5	2	10	Reduce	Cabinet approves the proposed increase in charge for the garden waste collection service and a reduction in the number of collections per year	18/12/2018	Karen Watson	
	If the charge for the garden waste collection service is increased and the number of collections reduced by 2, then take up of the service may reduce, resulting in less income for the Authority.	Karen Watson	22/11/2018	2	2	4	Reduce	A reduction in the demand for the service has been taken into account in assessing the £50,000 additional income that it is anticipated will be	18/12/2018	Karen Watson	

								generated as a result of the increased charges.			
Explanatory notes											
Impact – an assessment of the impact if the risk occurs on a scale of 1-5 (1 being least impact and 5 being major or critical)											
Likelihood – how likely is it that the risk will occur on a scale of 1-6 (1 being almost impossible, 2 is very low, 3 is low, 4 significant, 5 high and 6 a very high probability)											
Control - Either: Reduce / Accept / Transfer to 3rd party / Close											

Guidance

Types of risks could include the following:

- Potential reputation risks from the decision in terms of bad publicity, impact on the community or on partners;
- Financial risks associated with the decision;
- Political risks that the decision might not have cross-party support;
- Environmental risks associated with the decision;
- Potential adverse equality impacts from the decision;
- Capacity risks in terms of the ability of the organisation to ensure the effective delivery of the decision
- Legal risks arising from the decision

Remember to highlight risks which may impact on the strategy and actions which are being followed to deliver the objectives, so that members can identify the need to review objectives, options and decisions on a timely basis should these risks arise.

Risk ref

If the risk is already recorded, note either the corporate risk register or TEN reference

Risk Description

Please use “If xx happens then xx will be the consequence” (cause and effect). For example “If the council’s business continuity planning does not deliver effective responses to the predicted flu pandemic then council services will be significantly impacted.”

Risk owner

Please identify the lead officer who has identified the risk and will be responsible for it.

Risk score

Impact on a scale from 1 to 5 multiplied by likelihood on a scale from 1 to 6. Please see risk [scorecard](#) for more information on how to score a risk

Control

Either: Reduce / Accept / Transfer to 3rd party / Close

Action

There are usually things the council can do to reduce either the likelihood or impact of the risk. Controls may already be in place, such as budget monitoring or new controls or actions may also be needed.

Responsible officer

Please identify the lead officer who will be responsible for the action to control the risk.

For further guidance, please refer to the [risk management policy](#)

Transferred to risk register

Please ensure that the risk is transferred to a live risk register. This could be a team, divisional or corporate risk register depending on the nature of the risk and what level of objective it is impacting on