

Cheltenham Borough Council
Cabinet 6th December 2011
Review of the Garden Waste Scheme

Accountable member	Councillor Roger Whyborn, Cabinet Member Sustainability
Accountable officer	Rob Bell, Director Operations
Accountable scrutiny committee	Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Ward(s) affected	All
Key Decision	Yes
Executive summary	<p>This report reviews the garden waste scheme introduced in February 2011 as part of a package of measures designed to increase recycling and composting and reduce waste to landfill. The overall effect of this has been very positive, with recycling and composting performance increasing from 36% to 50% in the first quarter of this year.</p> <p>Review of the garden waste scheme and consultation with householders has influenced proposed improvements to the scheme. These include the provision of an alternative bag scheme in hard to access areas and the offer of a discount to existing and new brown bin customers for a set period.</p>
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Introduce a pay-per-bag service, at a charge of £1.25 per disposable bag to be sold in rolls of 10, in those hard-to-access streets where the existing wheeled bin service is less appropriate as a practical solution for garden waste collections, with effect from 30th January 2012. 2) Introduce a reduction in charge for the wheeled bin service to £34 per annum for new customers, and for customers who renew before their renewal date. This reduction is to run from 01/12/11 for a limited period of up to six months. 3) Delegate to the Director of Commissioning future changes to charges for garden waste services, in consultation with Cabinet members (Sustainability & Finance) and S151 officer.

Financial implications	<p>The gross operating cost of the Garden Waste scheme is budgeted to be £409,400 in 2011/12.</p> <p>The introduction of a reduction in the Garden Waste bin unit price with effect from 1 December 2011 is likely to result in foregone income for 2011/12 of £16,700. An additional income stream of £16,700 is anticipated from this reduced bin price. The proposed scheme is therefore cost neutral in 2011/12.</p> <p>In April and May 2012 the income foregone from sales would be £3,400. If 98% of all customers renewed their application the potential foregone income would be £8,300. A reduced price to £34.00 could generate an additional income stream of £8,900. Potential new customers for the period Jun 2012 to March 2013 could generate £36,800. The net additional receipt in 2012/13 is therefore anticipated to be £34,000.</p> <p>Contact officer: Andrew Powers, Accountant andrew.powers@cheltenham.gov.uk, 01242 264121</p>
Legal implications	<p>There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.</p> <p>Contact officer: donna.ruck@teWKesbury.gov.uk, solicitor 01684 272696</p>
HR implications (including learning and organisational development)	<p>The use of bags will introduce different manual handling risks to our employees which need to be addressed by 1) ensuring appropriate information is provided to customers on not overfilling the bags and 2) training for employees on the correct handling of the bags.</p> <p>The size of the bag will limit the weight that the bag can hold and help manage the manual handling risk.</p> <p>Contact officer: Julie McCarthy, HR Operations Manager julie.mccarthy@cheltenham.gov.uk, 01242 26 4355</p>
Key risks	<p>See Appendix A</p>
Corporate and community plan Implications	<p>The garden waste scheme contributes to Cheltenham having a clean and well maintained environment and delivering improved outcomes for customers and communities whilst meeting financial targets.</p>
Environmental and climate change implications	<p>The diversion of waste from landfill delivers significant environmental benefit.</p>

1. Introduction

- 1.1** In July 2010 cabinet considered a report on proposed waste and recycling collection systems and approved a new fortnightly garden waste collection scheme with access expanded to all households (subject to site specific health and safety considerations).
- 1.2** The new scheme was approved as part of a programme of change that included the separate collection of kitchen food waste, increased recycling and alternate weekly collections of residual waste and recyclables. The overall effect of these changes has been a significant increase in recycling and composting. 50% of Cheltenham's waste was recycled or composted in the first quarter of 2011/12, an increase of 14% (or 1077 tonnes) when compared with the first quarter of 2010/11.
- 1.3** The new garden waste scheme has now been in operation for 9 months and the purpose of this report is to review the scheme and recommend improvements.

2. Background

- 2.1** The increased financial and environmental cost of landfill has led local authorities to seek affordable and sustainable alternative solutions for household waste collection and disposal.
- 2.2** The Gloucestershire Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy (GJMWMS), approved by cabinet in October 2007, prioritises waste reduction, re-use and recycling as key strategies to reduce waste to landfill. In line with the GJMWMS the council has promoted home composting as a means of waste reduction and diversion of waste from landfill. To support this we have made available subsidised home compost bins, information and advice to householders. In the first six months of 2011/12 a total of 169 home composting units were delivered to householders in Cheltenham. As this strategy begins to take effect the total volume of garden waste collected for composting will reduce.
- 2.3** The GJMWMS set targets for Gloucestershire to recycle and compost 50% of waste by 2014/15. This council's corporate strategy (2011/12 action plan) set a target of 46% recycling and composting as a key milestone towards the strategic target. This was an ambitious target and I am pleased to say that we are on course to achieve it with garden waste composting playing an important role.
- 2.4** The previous garden waste scheme was considered deficient in terms of equality of opportunity. There were a significant number of households not included in the scheme who did not benefit from it. These householders complained that they were not receiving a service their close neighbours benefited from, even though they paid the same level of council tax. Furthermore, because the service was fully subsidised it effectively meant that those householders who did not receive the service, including those who live in flats, contributed through their council tax payment to the cost of a service they did not receive. The new scheme aims to be open to every household in Cheltenham for a reasonable charge.
- 2.5** The previous scheme also had inherent health and safety risks due to excessive manual handling of heavy 120 litre bags. With reference to guidance provided by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) it was recommended that the manual handling risks associated with garden waste collections be significantly reduced through the use of wheeled bins. To provide wheeled bins to every existing user under the previous arrangements was unaffordable. At £18-00 a bin the total cost to the council would have been £756,000 and given the pressure on public sector spending this option had to be discounted.
- 2.6** The most equitable, cost effective option to address the above issues was to introduce a charge for the provision of the removal of garden waste on a fortnightly basis. Customers who subscribe to the service benefit from the provision of a sturdy, manoeuvrable wheeled container for their

garden waste and receive a collection every other week throughout the year.

- 2.7 The charge for the service was set at £3.00 per bin per month, payable yearly in advance. This compared well with charges made by other authorities. Charging at the point of collection means that only those householders requiring the service pay for it. As at the beginning of November 2011, just over 11,000 households have subscribed to the service with an average of 30 new orders being received each week since August. It is likely that more householders will subscribe in the spring of 2012.
- 2.8 The income received covers the cost of providing the service. The income received is less than that anticipated but running costs are lower than budgeted and the shortfall in garden waste income has been partly offset by increased recycling income.
- 2.9 Payment by direct debit is not currently available for this service but will be made available to customers from June 2012.

3. Consultation and feedback

- 3.1 Officers have consulted the public regarding the new scheme. 281 householders were interviewed to obtain their views on the garden waste recycling service and potential alternatives.
- 3.2 Of those persons consulted at the Swindon Road recycling centre or at one of the garden waste roadshows, almost 95% said they were aware of the scheme. Reasons given for not subscribing to the scheme were price (20%), not enough waste to fill a bin (26%), not being prepared to pay anything for the service (27%) and convenience of the Swindon Road recycling centre (13%).
- 3.3 Of those persons consulted who live in hard to access areas with limited storage space, only 68% were aware of the new service. Reasons given for not subscribing to the service were price (20%), not enough space for a bin (16%), not enough waste to fill a bin (32%), convenience of the Swindon Road recycling centre (12%) and having very little garden space (24%). Only 8% said that they were not prepared to pay anything for the service.
- 3.4 When those householders in hard to access areas with limited storage were asked if they would be interested in an alternative service using disposable paper sacks at a fixed charge of £36 per annum only 22% responded positively.
- 3.5 When those same householders were asked if they would be interested in an alternative service using disposable paper sacks on a pay as you use basis 48% responded positively.

4. Reasons for recommendations

- 4.1 In response to concerns about price and affordability I am proposing to offer a discount for a limited period of six months from now. I propose to offer a £2.00 per annum discount to all householders who renew their subscription before their annual renewal date during this period. To encourage use of the scheme I also propose that this discount be offered to all new customers who subscribe to the scheme during the same period. Apart from these temporary offers, the price for a garden waste bin will be frozen at £36.00 per annum.
- 4.2 In response to demand for an alternative service in hard to access areas with limited storage I propose to offer a service using compostable paper sacks provided on a pay as you go basis at a price of £1.25 per 75 litre bag, to be sold in rolls of 10. This service will be limited to the streets listed in Appendix B of this report. Unfortunately, it is not possible to offer the bag scheme throughout the town. The compostable bags (and consequently the garden waste contained within them) cannot be windrow composted along with the brown bin waste. The bagged waste will be treated via the more expensive in vessel composting process and must therefore be

collected separately.

- 4.3** Bags will be available for purchase at the Municipal Offices, the Central Depot in Swindon Road or can be delivered direct to the household for a charge of £0.50 per delivery. The scheme will be publicised via a leaflet drop to households in those streets where it will be available.
- 4.4** Re-usable bags, as per the previous scheme, were ruled out due to health and safety considerations. As the bags are only 75L and are disposable, the manual handling risks associated with these bags are considered to be acceptable, in contrast to those of the previous scheme described in 3.5.

5. Alternative options considered

- 5.1** Providing a fully subsidised service as before is not affordable or sustainable given current public sector finances.
- 5.2** A bag service at a fixed charge of £36.00 per annum has less support from householders who live in hard to access areas. It would also be more expensive to administer and thus be less cost effective.

6. Performance management –monitoring and review

- 6.1** The overall effectiveness and viability of the scheme will be monitored via the budget monitoring process and waste data flow records.

Report author	Contact officer: Rob Bell, Director Operations rob.bell@cheltenham.gov.uk, 01242 264181
Appendices	1. Risk Assessment 2. List of streets for disposable bag scheme
Background information	1. Cabinet report 27 th July 2010, Proposed waste and recycling collection systems.

The risk				Original risk score (impact x likelihood)			Managing risk				
Risk ref.	Risk description	Risk Owner	Date raised	Impact 1-4	Likelihood 1-6	Score	Control	Action	Deadline	Responsible officer	Transferred to risk register
1.	Collection costs increase disproportionately in comparison to income	RB	4/11/11	2	3	6	R	Round scheduling to ensure one pass collection system	Feb 2012	BB	Div
2.	Householders not in hard to access areas and who do not have access to a pay as you use scheme may perceive inequality	RB	4/11/11	3	3	9	A	Ensure reasons for scheme differentiation are well publicised.	Feb 2012	BB	Div

Explanatory notes

Impact – an assessment of the impact if the risk occurs on a scale of 1-4 (4 being the greatest impact)

Likelihood – how likely is it that the risk will occur on a scale of 1-6 (6 being most likely)

Impact Description	Impact score	Probability	Likelihood Description	Likelihood Score
Negligible	1	0% - 5%	Almost impossible	1
Marginal	2	5% - 15%	Very low	2
Major	3	15% - 30%	Low	3
Critical	4	30% - 60%	Significant	4
		60% - 90%	High	5
		> 90%	Very high	6

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 4 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