

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCILCABINET26 November 2020Report by Director of EnvironmentGARDEN WASTE CHARGING PROPOSAL**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. To advise the Cabinet on proposals to commence charging for the collection of Garden Waste from 1st April 2021 to generate income and help avoid service cuts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. It is recommended that the Cabinet:
- a) Approve in principle the charging for services proposal outlined in the report; and
 - b) Note that a further detailed report will be submitted to the Cabinet prior to implementation of the scheme.

BACKGROUND

3. Councils have a statutory duty to collect household recyclates including food waste from domestic properties. However, they do not have a statutory duty to collect garden waste from domestic properties and several local authorities now charge or intend to charge a supplement for collecting this waste stream.

4. Currently garden waste is collected alongside food waste in the same bin on a weekly basis.

5. The Head of Accountancy (Chief Financial Officer) in a report to the Council on 28 October 2020 highlighted the challenging financial position facing the Council for 2021/22 and beyond. In particular the report identified that an initial budget shortfall of £11.828 million had been identified for 2021/22 and that Directors had been asked to identify potential savings up to that level.

6. In addition the Audit and Scrutiny Committee recommendations with regard to commercialisation and income generation were approved by the Cabinet in September 2020.

7. A particular recommendation from the Committee and approved by the Cabinet was to support the ongoing development of proposals (subject to submission of further reports where appropriate) by the Environment Department to generate new income or maximise potential from a range of existing arrangements including annual garden waste collection arrangements.

REPORT

8. Given the context outlined above this report proposes the introduction of a charging scheme for the collection of garden waste from 1 April 2021.
9. The scheme would be optional. Residents could choose to opt in or decline the service and make their own arrangements.
10. In terms of the scheme it is proposed that residents will continue to receive a weekly collection of Food Waste through their Brown Bin but will no longer be entitled to deposit garden waste within it unless the household has paid a supplementary charge.
11. A permit scheme will be applied and residents who accept the charge will be provided with a bin sticker which clearly identifies their participation in the scheme.
12. Refuse Collection Operatives will actively check brown bins without stickers for compliance with the scheme and will not uplift them should garden waste be present within the bin. Non-compliant bins will either have to be emptied by the residents themselves or can be uplifted by Neighbourhood Services. There would be a charge for emptying brown bins containing Garden Waste from non-members of the scheme of £35 on each occasion, to cover the cost of sending vehicles back out to service these bins. Residents could however choose to take their waste to one of the Council's Household Waste Recycling Centres, or alternatively participate in the scheme.
13. Most Councils who have introduced Garden Waste Charging have seen uptake of between 50-70 percent of households.
14. The proposed scheme is more generous than many others operated by the Scottish councils and will offer a 50 week service with the only shut down being between the two weeks during the festive period.
15. The proposed fee per household would be £40 per annum (for the start of the scheme only one bin per household would be permissible in order to assess uptake of the scheme. However, the possibility of additional garden waste bins per property will be investigated as soon as possible).
16. Preparations for the scheme will have to start on approval of this report in order to implement a payment system, produce permits, recruit additional administration/operational staff and communicate the scheme to members of the public.
17. Christmas trees will be collected as part of the scheme but non-members will require to pay a fee of £15 per tree if they wish their tree collected.
18. The scheme would require to be a high quality and totally reliable service for customers. This would require some additional investment in fleet and staff. In addition, there would be some costs associated with the management, operation and supervision of the scheme. However, after taking these into account the scheme could generate a net income around £800,000.

FINANCE AND EFFICIENCY

19. The following matters are relevant;
 - A charge of £40 per household with an approximate take-up of 25,000 households would achieve an annual net income of around £800,000

- An additional charge for uplifting non-compliant bins should the customer request this would be levied at £35
- Christmas tree collections would be charged at £15 per tree for non-members of the scheme
- As Garden Waste collections are deemed as an additional service there would be no exemptions for those households receiving universal credit or benefits
- The Environment Department requires to find substantial savings for 2021/22

CONSULTATION

20. Preliminary discussions have taken place with IT.

PARTNERSHIP WORKING

21. The Environment Department will require IT assistance to implement an administration and charging system.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSALS

22. The proposal will see an end to “free” collections of Garden Waste which is not a statutory material for collection purposes. Lower income households may be affected by the introduction of a charging scheme.

23. There will be some additional staffing implications. There are no property, legal, IT or equality issues at this point in time. However, a full equality impact assessment will be carried out prior to the further detailed report on the implementation of the scheme being submitted to the Cabinet.

CONCLUSIONS

24. Many local authorities are now, or will be, charging for Garden Waste collections.

25. There is an opportunity to generate significant income from a Garden Waste charging scheme while creating some additional employment to administer and operate the scheme.

26. This was recognised in discussions with the Audit and Scrutiny Committee in the context of commercialisation and income generation.

27. The proposal forms part of the Environment Department’s savings for 2021/22.

RECOMMENDATIONS

28. It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- a) Approve in principle the charging for services proposal outlined in the report; and
- b) Note that a further detailed report will be submitted to the Cabinet prior to implementation of the scheme.

Director of Environment

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