

ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Tuesday 11 December 2018
Report Subject	The Review of Garden Waste Charges in Flintshire
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member Streetscene and Countryside
Report Author	Chief Officer for Streetscene And Transportation
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In January 2018, Cabinet approved the introduction of a charge for the collection of garden waste, which formed part of the Stage One budget proposals for the 2018/19 financial year and aligned the Councils waste and recycling model towards the Welsh Government Collections Blueprint.

Cabinet requested that a full review of the charge should be undertaken at the end of the first full season and this report sets out both the outcome of that review and the associated financial assessment of the scheme.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1.	That Scrutiny supports the continuation of the charging policy for the Garden Waste Service for 2019 and in subsequent years.
2.	That Scrutiny recommends Cabinet approves the continuation of the flat rate charging mechanism, without concessions and that the charge of £30 will continue to apply for each bin collection made during the 2019 season.
3.	That Scrutiny recommends Cabinet approve that from 2019, the annual review of the Garden Waste charge should be included in the annual portfolio review of fees and charges.
4.	That Scrutiny recommends Cabinet approves the request to Cabinet for the service to explore an alternative, technology based system to monitor payments and notify the waste collectors of a paid subscription, in readiness for the 2020 season and that £30k of the funds raised in the 2018-19 financial year are set aside to fund the new arrangement.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	BACKGROUND TO THE REVIEW OF GARDEN WASTE CHARGES
1.01	<p>There is no statutory duty on the Council to collect garden waste however garden waste collections contribute significantly to the overall recycling performance through both the brown bin collection service and the garden waste collected at our Household Recycling Centres (HRC's).</p>
1.02	<p>The Council first introduced garden waste collections in 2003. At the time the service was offered mainly to urban properties with gardens, which accounts for around 80% of the number of overall properties in Flintshire. In 2011 on the introduction of the current Managed Weekly Collection service it was offered to all properties - both rural and urban.</p>
1.03	<p>The collection service is provided from the 1st March to the 30th November, as this is when the demand for the service is at its highest and the majority of residents do not require the service over the winter period. The service provided residents with a 140L brown bin (for garden waste) which was collected alternately with a 180L black bin (for residual waste) on a fortnightly basis.</p> <p>The garden waste collected is taken to the Council's own 'open windrow' composting facility in Greenfield and turned into soil conditioner which is then made available to residents, free of charge at the Council's HRC sites.</p>
1.04	<p>WG Waste Collections Blueprint (2011) recommend that this discretionary service is offered as a chargeable service, which should help reduce landfill and generate revenue for the provision of other statutory services, such as dry recycling and food collections. It is worth noting that WG provide significant funding for the recycling services through the Single Environment Grant each year, although the amount received is falling as the grant has been significantly reduced over the past 3-4 years. The funding provided by WG does not match the cost of operating the full recycling service and the year on year reduction in the Single Environment Grant is encouraging Councils to follow their Blueprint more closely.</p> <p>A link to the blueprint is attached to this report however the advice on Garden Waste Collections is clear :</p> <p>Councils should:</p> <p><i>Apply charges for green waste collections (as allowed under the Controlled Waste Regulations 1994), and collect it only once a fortnight.</i></p>
1.05	<p>In April 2015 Cabinet approved the introduction of a charge on properties where more than one brown bin was being used by residents. Around 2,200 residents subscribed to this service, which generated a revenue income of around £50,000 to the Council in 2017-18.</p>
1.06	<p>In line with the Corporate Charging and Income Policy it is important that all discretionary services achieve full cost recovery and therefore the charge for the garden waste service was intended and designed to represent that position. Subsequently, Cabinet approved the introduction of the £30</p>

	<p>subscription charge for the collection of all garden waste in January 2018 and subscriptions were accepted from February 2018, with the new service commencing in April 2018. Following approval of the charging policy, payment mechanism were introduced to encourage online payments and telephone payments for the new service.</p>																								
1.07	<p>In the first year of the subscription process, 33,871 permits were sold.</p> <p>Of which</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">29,021 Properties ordered 1 permit 4,292 Properties ordered 2 permits 558 Properties ordered 3 permits</p> <p>This indicates that over 40% of residents have subscribed for at least one bin to be collected under the new service. The actual take up exceeded the financial target set for the service and generated an additional £166k over and above the £800k target - once the previous target for additional bins of £50k per year had been accounted for.</p>																								
1.08	<p>The review, requested by Cabinet has considered the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The subscription rate for 2019. • The potential to extend the service to operate over a full year. • Payment mechanisms. • The use of technology to log payments and record collections. • The potential to offer a reduced concessionary reduced rates for residents on benefits. 																								
1.09	<p>The subscription rate for 2019</p> <p>The options for charging arrangement in 2019 are as follows:</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center;"> <thead> <tr style="background-color: #d3d3d3;"> <th>Option</th> <th>1st Bin (140L)</th> <th>2 or more bins</th> <th>Potential Additional Funding</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>£30</td> <td>£30/ per bin</td> <td>As existing</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>£35</td> <td>£35</td> <td>£169k</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3</td> <td>£40</td> <td>£40</td> <td>£338k</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4</td> <td>£45</td> <td>£45</td> <td>£508k</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5</td> <td>£50</td> <td>£50</td> <td>£676k</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Option	1 st Bin (140L)	2 or more bins	Potential Additional Funding	1	£30	£30/ per bin	As existing	2	£35	£35	£169k	3	£40	£40	£338k	4	£45	£45	£508k	5	£50	£50	£676k
Option	1 st Bin (140L)	2 or more bins	Potential Additional Funding																						
1	£30	£30/ per bin	As existing																						
2	£35	£35	£169k																						
3	£40	£40	£338k																						
4	£45	£45	£508k																						
5	£50	£50	£676k																						
1.10	<p>Given that this was the first year of the service, it is thought that a rise in charges may be seen as unfair and may impact on the number of people subscribing for the service in the new year. Whilst there has been limited comment or criticism of the new service and the charge, there is a risk that take up may suffer if prices are raised at this point. It is therefore proposed that the price for the service is fixed at the same level for the 2019 season (£30 – Option 1).</p>																								

1.11	<p>The potential to extend the service to operate over a full year.</p> <p>Whilst the current service does not operate between December and February, there is also limited demand for the service during these periods and whilst a small number of requests have been received for a full year service, the majority of residents have accepted the service as provided. This position is supported by reviewing the green waste arising's from previous years which shows minimal levels of garden waste previously collected during this period. It should be noted that all HRC sites receive garden waste throughout the year.</p> <p>The proposal is therefore not to offer an extension of the service into the winter months and that collections continue to operate over the period March – November (inclusive)</p>
1.12	<p>Payment mechanisms.</p> <p>Options are now being considered to provide streamlined and easier payment mechanisms for residents, which may include Direct Debit with automated renewal arrangements. This will reduce the administrative burden on the service and it is expected that these arrangements will be in place in readiness for the 2020 season.</p>
1.13	<p>The use of technology to log payments and record collections.</p> <p>The system for the payment of the subscription requires the resident to contact the Council to subscribe to the service. This contact is either by website, phone or by calling in at one of the Council's Connect Centres. They are asked to provide an upfront payment and they are then posted out a pack, which contains a permit sticker and a copy of the terms & conditions, along with an information leaflet of where to place the sticker. The stickers are coloured and have a bar code to prevent them from being duplicated which makes it easier for the collection crews to identify the additional bins at each property.</p>
1.14	<p>There are technology based systems available which will deliver a more efficient method of registering a bin to a property and indicating to the operatives that the collection has been paid for. This will speed up the management and payment process and will remove the need to issue stickers each year. It is recommended that options for this approach are considered and introduced in readiness for the 2020 season. The estimated cost of the implementation is £30k and it is proposed that the funding is found from the current year in order to purchase the new system.</p>
1.15	<p>The potential to offer a reduced rate for residents on benefits</p> <p>Staff have reviewed the take up of the service in 2018 and looked at options to provide a concession under the Council Tax reduction scheme (CTRS).</p> <p>The analysis showed that during the first year of implementation, 30% of resident who are in receipt of CTRS benefits subscribed to the garden waste service.</p>

1.16	The potential to offer a reduced rate for residents on benefits was considered during the first year of introduction however it would be difficult to provide such a discount without passing additional costs onto other non-eligible residents.
1.17	The management and administration around offering reduced rates for residents on benefits will be both costly and time consuming to carry out the checking and approving of evidence from residents, along with monitoring changes in resident's circumstances throughout the year which could lead to confusion when issuing permits.
1.18	It is therefore proposed that no reduced rate will be offered to residents on benefits and that the current flat rate of £30 should apply to all collections in 2019. The cost of the service will be reviewed annually in future and included within the Portfolio's annual review of fees and charges.

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	The financial benefit from the introducing the charge is significant and detailed in the report.
2.02	The delivery and receipt of the payments and stickers places a high demand on the service support team.

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	With Cabinet Member.
3.02	With Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	A delivery project team is established and monitors the delivery of the garden waste charging project.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	None

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	Link to WG Blue print http://www.wrapcymru.org.uk/sites/files/wrap/Municipal%20Sector%20Plan%20Wales%20-%20Collections%20Buleprint.pdf
6.02	Contact Officer: Stephen O Jones Telephone: 01352 704700 E-mail: stephen.o.jones@flintshire.gov.uk

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	WG – Welsh Government MWC – Managed Weekly Collections HRC - Household Recycling Centres CTRS – Council Tax Reduction Scheme