

CABINET

Date of Meeting	Tuesday, 19 th December 2017
Report Subject	The Introduction of Garden Waste Charges in Flintshire
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Streetscene and Countryside
Report Author	Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation)
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2011 Flintshire introduced its Managed Weekly Collection service (MWC) which changed waste collections in the County from a weekly, black sack service collected at the back door to weekly recycling and food collections with fortnightly collections of residual waste alternating with garden waste - with all of the various waste streams being collected at the kerbside.

This change significantly improved the Council's recycling performance and the Council have since met all of the statutory targets set by Welsh Government (WG), with the next significant targets being 64% in 2019/20 and 70% in 2025. The Council continues to perform well and the performance for 2016/17 was above 68%.

Whilst our recycling performance is good, the service we provide to residents is not fully in line with WG's Blueprint for waste collections in Wales, as the Blueprint recommends that Local Authorities charge residents for the provision of the garden waste collection service and that this funding is then utilised to support the overall recycling service. Given the current period of austerity and the ongoing financial challenges being faced by the Council, it is now necessary to introduce such a charge which will be similar to that which has been introduced by a number of Councils in North Wales and an ever growing number of Councils across England and Wales.

This report sets out how the proposal will be implemented and provides an estimate for the associated financial benefit to the Council from the proposal.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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| 1. | That Cabinet approves the charging policy for the Garden Waste Service and the arrangements detailed within the report for the smooth introduction of the charge which forms part of Stage One budget proposals for 2018/19. |
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REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE BACKGROUND TO THE PROPOSALS
1.01	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).
1.02	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.
1.03	The current service is provided from the 1st March to the 31st November, as this is when the demand for the service is at its highest and most residents do not require the service over the winter period. The service currently provides residents with a 140L brown bin (for garden waste) which is collected alternately with a 180L black bin (for residual waste) on a fortnightly basis. The garden waste collected is then 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.
1.04	In 2011 WG issued its Waste Collections Blueprint which stated the preferred delivery method for waste collections in Wales, in order to deliver high and sustainable levels of recycling. Flintshire's existing waste and recycling collection service in the main aligns with the collections Blueprint, however a significant departure from the process includes the garden waste collection service.
1.05	<p>WG 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.</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>
1.06	In April 2015 Cabinet approved the introduction of a charge for the 2 nd or 3 rd brown bin used by residents as previously these bins were also

	collected free of charge. Around 2,200 residents have subscribed to this service which now generates a revenue income of around £50,000 to the Council.
1.07	Given the increasing financial pressures on the Council from both reducing budgets and the reduction in WG grant funding, it is now necessary to introduce a charge for the garden waste service in Flintshire. Whilst the decision to introduce a charge for this service is a difficult one, it should be remembered that garden waste can still be taken to the Councils HRC sites - without charge. The decision to provide and operate a more extensive HRC service than was advised by WG, will result in 5 modern and well operated HRC sites being available to residents, at strategic locations across the County.
1.08	How much will the service cost? In line with the Corporate charging and Income Policy it is important that all discretionary services achieve full cost recovery and the proposed charges are intended and designed to represent that position.
1.09	The proposed charging arrangement will be as follows: Charge for First bin (140 litre) - £30 per year Charge for second and third bin (140 litre) - £30 per bin per year The service provided will operate from 1 st March – 30 th November and collections will be fortnightly from kerbside or property curtilage.
1.10	Introducing a charge for all garden waste collections has been implemented by approximately 42% of all Local Authorities across both England and Wales and in Authorities in North Wales, such as Denbighshire, Gwynedd and Conwy who all now charge for their garden waste collection service. Local charges are as follows (2017-18) : Denbighshire - £34 per annum (240 litre bin) & £22 per annum (180 litre) Conwy - £1.50 per black sack (max 6 collected per week) Wirral - £40 per annum (240 litre bin) Gwynedd - £33 per annum (240 litre bin)
1.11	Experience in other counties has shown that whilst significant income is generated, there is a direct impact on recycling performance. Initial take up of the service is normally around 40% of residents, with around 60% of the original tonnage being collected at kerbside. All of the counties report an increase in green waste tonnages received through their HRC's of around 15% and the capacity to receive the additional garden waste material at Flintshire's HRC sites will be increased to accommodate the additional material. There is little or no evidence of an increase in fly tipping of garden waste in these areas however the overall reduction in recycling performance is expected to be between 2% and 3%.
1.12	To ensure that garden waste does not divert to the residual waste stream a concentration on the enforcement of residual (black bin) side waste will be

	necessary, particularly in the initial months after introducing garden waste charges. The process for enforcement against side waste has already been approved by Cabinet and will be rolled out across the County in January 2018.
1.13	<p>How the system will operate?</p> <p>The existing system for gathering payment for the second bin requires the resident to contact the Council to request the service, this contact is either by phone or by calling in at one of the Council's Connect Centres. They are asked to provide an upfront payment (currently £24) and they are then issued with a sticker for their 1st brown bin and one for each additional bin which they have paid for. The stickers are coloured and have a bar code to prevent them from being duplicated and this makes it easier for the collection crews to identify the additional bins at each property.</p>
1.14	When the new charges for the full garden waste service are introduced the number of residents signing up to the service will significantly increase - up to an estimated 27,600 (based on a 40% uptake). Whilst the current system of issuing stickers will remain in place the option of paying for this service online (through the Council website) will be introduced. The existing payment options will remain for those who do not have access to a computer.
1.15	Residents will be notified of the charge by letter and by stickers which will be placed on the garden waste bins in January. Further communication will be sent with the Council Tax information in March 2018 and residents will have until 1 st April 2018 to register for the new service. Once payment has been received stickers will be dispatched to the residents in order that the crews can recognise which properties are requiring the service. The service will be provided free of charge to all residents during March 2018.
1.16	In the longer term and particularly if waste containers are replaced, it will be sensible to place a microchip in each wheel bin to evidence the time and date when it was emptied. Further enquiries on the possibility to retrofit the microchips within existing bins will be made as this will speed up the management and payment process and will remove the need to issue stickers each year. If the business case can be established the alternative recording system could be in place in readiness for the 2019-20 season.
1.17	The service will be delivered utilising the existing workforce however the number of vehicles and operators required will reduce, depending on the demand for the service. The rounds will be optimised, based on the number of requests for the service and this will ensure the continued efficiency of the routes whilst maintaining the workloads for staff. The reduction in staff numbers will be accommodated from current vacancies within the service and there will be no redundancies as a result of the proposals.

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	There will be a reduction in the number of front line operational staff required to operate the service which will be taken up from existing vacancies within

	the service.										
2.02	The financial benefit to introducing a charge is significant and detailed below. <table border="1" data-bbox="311 235 1396 470"> <thead> <tr> <th>Households*</th> <th>Charge</th> <th>Predicted Income</th> <th>Other Operational Savings</th> <th>Total</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>27,600</td> <td>£30.00</td> <td>£828,000.00</td> <td>£130,000.00</td> <td>£958,000.00</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>* Assumes 40% households sign up to the service</p>	Households*	Charge	Predicted Income	Other Operational Savings	Total	27,600	£30.00	£828,000.00	£130,000.00	£958,000.00
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3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	A Member workshop was held in October 2016 seeking views on the proposed changes to waste services and one of the recommendations was the possibility of charging for garden waste collections. The suggestion was further raised at budget workshops over the summer 2018, when the proposal received broad support.
3.02	Environment Overview and Scrutiny recommended Cabinet approve the proposals at their meeting in November 2018
3.03	Extensive communications with residents is required - once the details of the proposals have been approved by Cabinet.
3.04	A full Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed on the proposal.
3.05	Once the service is established a further period of consultation on the future direction of the garden waste service can be undertaken. This will include gaining residents opinion and input into the following developments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The potential to extend the service over the full year. • The use of microchips within the bin to log and record collections. • Payment mechanisms (Standing order etc.) • The potential to offer a reduced rate for residents on benefits will also be 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.

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	A delivery project team has been established to monitor and oversee the delivery of the new service.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	None.

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

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	<p>WG – Welsh Government MWC – Managed Weekly Collections HRC - Household Recycling Centres</p>