

**THE CABINET**  
**7 OCTOBER 2019**

**Subject:** Review of Garden Waste Processing Options  
**Lead Officer:** Craig Bourne  
*Contact on 01789 260650*  
**Lead Member/  
Portfolio Holder:** Councillor I Shenton

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### Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide The Cabinet with details of a proposal to introduce a chargeable garden waste service from 1 June 2020, allowing enough time for effective promotion and roll-out to maximise sign up to the service.

### Recommendations

- (1) That the introduction of the proposed chargeable garden waste service as outlined in this report be approved for public and stakeholder consultation.**
  - (2) That the outcome of the public and stakeholder consultation is presented to The Cabinet in December for further consideration.**
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## 1 Background/Information

- 1.1 The Council is facing significant financial and environmental pressures in the medium term.
  - 1.2 The continued reductions in grant funding made available by central government, including for the first time ever the Council receiving no Revenue Support Grant (previously up to £3,853,563 per year), and the expectation that the Rural Services Delivery Grant (currently £299,115 per year) will not continue, means that the Council must consider a number of options to close the budget deficit in future years.
  - 1.3 One option is to introduce a chargeable garden waste service to help the Council reduce the costs of service provision. This would also result in more environmentally friendly ways of dealing with garden waste.
  - 1.4 The collection of garden waste is a discretionary service not a statutory service – i.e. one that does not need to be provided by the Council.
  - 1.5 The Council has provided a garden waste service since 2003. Garden and food waste is collected together. Currently, a maximum of two green bins or six green sacks are collected per property free of charge on a fortnightly basis (all-year round). There is a charge for the emptying of third or subsequent bins of £45 for 1 year; £62 for 2 years; and £80 for 3 years. No charge is made for green sacks.
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- 1.6 It is estimated that 54,714 households have one green bin and of these, 18,551 households have two green bins and 20 households have three green bins. This equates to over 73,000 bins distributed across Stratford-on-Avon District which represents a Council capital investment of around £1.9 million. There are circa 1,000 households which use green sacks.
- 1.7 Based on the recent waste composition analysis carried out on behalf of Warwickshire County Council (WCC), 99% of garden waste collected in Stratford-on-Avon District is collected via the green bins, which demonstrates that the service is very well used. The analysis also found that 6% of the contents of the green bins are food waste and 94% is garden waste.
- 1.8 The Council is a constituent member of the Warwickshire Waste Partnership. The charging arrangements of the other waste collection authorities in Warwickshire are as follows:

Table 1: Garden waste charges in Warwickshire

<b>Local Authority</b>	<b>Annual Charge</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
North Warwickshire Borough Council	£40 per extra bin	Fortnightly
Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council	£40 per bin	Fortnightly
Rugby Borough Council	£40 per bin	Fortnightly
Warwick District Council	None	Fortnightly

1.9 **Proposal**

- 1.9.1 The proposal is set out below:
- 1.9.2 To introduce a chargeable garden waste service from 1 June 2020 to align with the grass cutting season.
- 1.9.3 The annual charge for the service will be £40.00 per wheeled bin or equivalent sacks. Additional bins/sacks will be charged at the same rate.
- 1.9.4 A 5% discount in the first year will be offered to those residents who set up an annual Direct Debit for the service.
- 1.9.5 A free compost bin will be offered to those residents who are in receipt of Council Tax Reduction and who choose not to participate in the service.
- 1.9.6 These charges will be added to the Council's Fees and Charges Schedule.
- 1.9.7 The payment terms will be a single annual subscription fee payable in advance and non-refundable.
- 1.9.8 The subscription year will be fixed from 1 June to 31 May (12-months).
- 1.9.9 Bins/sacks will be emptied on a fortnightly basis throughout the year. Residents will be able to share collections with neighbours; however, the crews will only collect from those households with a valid subscription.
- 1.9.10 Households will be able to use their existing bin(s). If residents do not currently have adequate bin provision, they may purchase new bins (as appropriate) for a one-off cost in accordance with the Council's Fees and Charges Schedule. Surplus bins will be collected on request.
- 1.9.11 New branded green sacks will be available for collection from Elizabeth House provided that the resident has paid for the service.
- 1.9.12 Residents will be required to 'opt-in' to the service on an annual basis. They will receive a branded sticker/tag each year so that the crews are

aware of the bins to be emptied.

1.9.13 When an application for the service is received, the Council will notify the contractor and residents will receive the branded sticker/tag for display on each bin confirming their entitlement to the service for that year.

1.9.14 Residents not wishing to buy into the service but wishing to receive a weekly food waste collection will be provided with a food waste caddy, on request, free of charge (if they do not already have one). This caddy will then be presented on the scheduled garden waste collection day and the contents emptied and composted. The Council's existing stock of caddies will be utilised during the initial transition to the service.

1.9.15 In the event that the resident moves property, the service will be transferrable within Stratford-on-Avon District (after advising the Council of the address change) or to the new occupier.

1.9.16 The Council will promote discounted home composting and implement a strict policy of no garden waste in the grey bin, with any persistent contamination breaches resulting in the non-collection of grey bins.

1.9.17 The Council will work closely with WCC to minimise the amount of garden waste sent to the Coventry Energy from Waste plant.

#### **1.10 Public and Stakeholder Consultation**

1.10.1 The Council has a general duty to act fairly. As such, the Council will consult residents on possible charging for a garden waste service.

1.10.2 The objective of the consultation is to establish whether a chargeable garden waste service would be viable in Stratford-on-Avon District.

1.10.3 The Council is interested in finding out:

- Whether residents would continue to use the garden waste service if it became chargeable;
- If so, how much would they be prepared to pay for the service; and
- If not, how would they dispose of their garden waste?

## **2 Options available to The Cabinet**

2.1 To approve public and stakeholder consultation based on the above proposal; or

2.2 To decide not to proceed with the above proposal and retain a free of charge garden waste service; or

2.3 To decide to no longer provide a garden waste service from 1 August 2022 (the start of the Council's new waste collection contract).

## **3 Evidence Base**

3.1 In 2010, a budget consultation exercise was carried out on behalf of the Council which reported that 51% of residents surveyed in Stratford-on-Avon District would be willing to pay for a garden waste service.

3.2 Recent research carried out by the Press Association shows that 65% of local authorities in England charge for a garden waste service, at an average cost of around £46 per year. Prices range from £22 per year in Richmondshire, North Yorkshire to £96 per year in Harlow, Essex.

3.3 The Council has carried out a benchmarking exercise with neighbouring local authorities (see **Appendix 1**), which shows that an annual charge of £40.00 per bin or equivalent sacks is reasonable.

#### **4 Members' Comments**

4.1 The Portfolio Holder for Operations is a member of the Project Board and his comments have been incorporated into this report.

#### **5 Implications of the proposal**

##### **5.1 Legal/Human Rights Implications**

5.1.1 The Council is permitted to charge for discretionary services by virtue of Section 93 of the Local Government Act 2003. It is also permissible to have different charges for different people; however, the annual income must not exceed the actual cost of the service.

5.1.2 The Controlled Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2012 allows a charge to be made for the collection of household garden waste.

##### **5.2 Financial**

5.2.1 The current contract cost of providing a garden waste collection service is £1,076,016 per year. This does not include Council costs such as contract management and capital charges for the bins purchased to date.

5.2.2 The introduction of a chargeable garden waste service is projected to generate a saving of just over £1 million in Year 1 (see below), with the expectation of increased sign up and greater yields in subsequent years.

Table 2: Cost Sensitivity Analysis

<b>Year 1</b>	<b>2020/21</b>			
Sign up to the service	25%	30%	35%	40%
Projected saving to SDC	(£643,361)	(£771,726)	(£900,091)	(£1,028,456)

5.2.3 The assumptions made are as follows:

- 55,714 households in Stratford-on-Avon District with a garden;
- 6,053 households entitled to Council Tax Reduction;
- Initial sign up rate of 25% increasing to 40% by the end of Year 1;
- 80% of subscribing households will set up an annual Direct Debit to benefit from the discounted rate;
- 20% of subscribing households will pay for two green bins;
- 20 subscribing households will pay for three green bins; and
- Increased sign up to the service in subsequent years will be used to offset any inflationary cost increases.

5.2.4 WCC has a Biowaste contract with Biffa Waste Services Limited ('Biffa') which relies on WCC providing at least 39,000 tonnes of garden and food waste to Biffa's In-Vessel Composting (IVC) facility at Ufton per year to meet the contractual obligation.

5.2.5 In 2018/19, 20,003 tonnes of mixed garden and food waste was collected from Stratford-on-Avon District and delivered to Ufton. If the tonnage collected in Stratford-on-Avon District were to reduce, WCC may be exposed to financial penalties.

- 5.2.6 The Council is under no obligation to meet any financial penalties, however, in the spirit of partnership working, the Council will consider making a fixed payment to WCC in the first year.
- 5.2.7 There are no new charges to be paid to the Council's current waste collection contractor (Biffa Municipal Limited), however, there may be some operational efficiencies realised when the contract is re-let.
- 5.2.8 Initial set up costs, where possible, will be met from existing budgets. Any additional expenditure required for the implementation of the service will be deducted from the income generated.
- 5.2.9 Investment in ICT infrastructure will be required to support channel shift away from telephony to online customer self-service.
- 5.2.10 Resourcing costs will include customer engagement; the administration of an up-to-date register of subscribing households; arranging the delivery of the branded stickers/tags; the collection of surplus bins; and operating the charging system and payment mechanism.

### 5.3 ***Environmental/Climate Change Implications***

- 5.3.1 The proposal would result in:
- 5.3.2 A greater amount of garden waste taken to WCC's household waste recycling centres (HWRCs) by residents who do not want to pay for the service. This can be treated in a more environmentally friendly way as it is not mixed with food waste (an aerobic process called 'open windrow composting'). It also produces a higher grade of compost that has a greater range of uses.
- 5.3.3 An increase in home composting which is the most environmentally friendly way of dealing with garden waste. It is widely acknowledged that well-managed compost heaps provide microclimates for minibeasts and produce a healthy clean mulch or fertiliser for the garden, which helps to return vital nutrients to the soil.
- 5.3.4 A positive reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> and NO<sub>x</sub> vehicle emissions as less garden waste would need to be collected from the kerbside, notwithstanding the increased number of visits by residents to the HWRCs.
- 5.3.5 The potential impact on the Council's household recycling rate is set out in **Appendix 2**.

### 5.4 ***Corporate Strategy***

- 5.4.1 A chargeable garden waste service would enable the Council to reduce costs and ensure that it continues to deliver improvements in securing value for money.

### 5.5 ***Analysis of the effects on Equality***

- 5.5.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed (see **Appendix 3**).
- 5.5.2 There are significant social inequalities associated with the existing garden waste service. As it is charged through the council tax system, every household pays for the service even if they do not benefit from it.
- 5.5.3 For example, occupiers of flats, houses in multiple occupation, sheltered accommodation, and high density terraced houses with no gardens all pay for the service. These are often the types of properties occupied by those on low incomes, whilst occupiers of large rural properties may have

several bins to dispose of their garden waste for the same basic cost.

- 5.5.4 If a chargeable service was introduced, this inequality would be removed. Householders would have the choice to either subscribe to the service or make alternative arrangements such as discounted home composting or take their garden waste to one of WCC's HWRCs free of charge.

## 5.6 **Data Protection**

- 5.6.1 A Data Protection Impact Assessment will be carried out as part of the implementation of the service.
- 5.6.2 The Council will process residents' personal data in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR.

## 6 **Risk Assessment**

- 6.1 The risks involved with the proposed introduction of a chargeable garden waste service are outlined in the initial risk log (see **Appendix 4**).
- 6.2 The risk of not proceeding with the proposal is that the Council may not be able to close the budget deficit in future years.

## 7 **Conclusion**

- 7.1 The recommendations presented in this report, for consideration by The Cabinet, would allow the Council to introduce a reasonable charge for the collection of garden waste in Stratford-on-Avon District to help reduce the costs of service provision.
- 7.2 Without this charge, the Council may have to consider discontinuing the existing garden waste service. The savings generated from this proposal will make a valuable contribution towards closing the budget deficit.

Tony Perks

HEAD OF TECHNICAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

Background papers:

None