

Special Cabinet  
9 January 2017

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL

Minutes of a special meeting of the CABINET held on Monday 9 January 2017 at 6.30pm in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, The Campus, Welwyn Garden City, Herts, AL8 6AE.

- PRESENT: Councillors J Dean (Leader of the Council) (Chairman)  
M Perkins (Deputy Leader and Executive Member, Planning, Housing and Community) (Vice-Chairman)
- D Bell (Executive Member, Resources)  
H Bromley (Executive Member, Environment)  
T Kingsbury (Executive Member, Policy and Culture)  
B.Sarson (Executive Member, Business, Partnerships and Public Health)  
R.Trigg (Executive Member, Governance, Community Safety, Police and Crime Commissioner and Corporate Property)
- ALSO PRESENT: H.Beckett, L.Brandon, J.Broach, A.Chesterman, L.Chesterman  
M.Cowan, I.Dean, M.Holloway, J.Fitzpatrick, H.Morgan, K.Thorpe
- OFFICIALS PRESENT: Chief Executive (M.Saminaden)  
Executive Director (Public Protection, Planning and Governance) (N.Long)  
Executive Director (Housing and Communities) (S.Russell)  
Head of Law and Administration (M.Martinus)  
Head of Resources (T.Neill)  
Governance Services Manager (G.R.Seal)  
Senior Communications Officer (L.Bertram)  
Governance Services Officer (M.Lowe)

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106. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 6 December 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

107. ITEM RELATING TO THE BUDGET AND POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE COUNCIL

The following item was considered:-

107.1. Future Garden Waste Collection (Forward Plan Reference FP778)

Report of the Executive Director (Resources, Environment and Cultural Services) on options for the review of future garden waste collection.

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The Leader of the Council, Councillor J.Dean accepted petitions presented by Councillor M.Holloway with 2455 signatures and Councillor M.Cowan with 325 signatures against the introduction of a charge for brown bin collection.

Councillor H.Bromley, Executive Member (Environment) made the following statement:-

"I am sure that we all aware that the current Garden Waste Collection service costs about £1.1m per annum to operate, which is a huge burden on the council tax payer. As is well known, our grants from central government have continued to be cut and the Council is faced with a £2m budget gap in the future. For these reasons we have had to carry out a full review of all our services with a view to making further efficiencies by either cutting expenditure or increasing income. It is within this context that the garden waste collection service has been reviewed.

Following our review of all services, we have concluded that this is an area where it would be appropriate to bring in a charge for the service, as has been done by many other councils across the country. The alternative would be to stop collecting garden waste altogether, which would not be the first choice for anyone. The consultation responses clearly indicated that this is a highly valued service, used by many people, and that a small charge would be preferable to ending the service.

A total of 4516 responses were received and the results of the survey are detailed in Appendix 1 of the report.

You will all have seen the adverse publicity about the proposals in this report, so I do not intend going over the issues again. It appears that the main area of concern is that we are not currently proposing to have a separate food collecting system. It would have been great to have been able to introduce a separate food system in conjunction with the charging for the garden waste, but things really do need to move on quickly and there is no way of bringing in an affordable food collection system in time to address our dire budget issues.

A member of public recently raised a question about the impact that these proposals would have on the Council's landfill targets and a potential breach of these targets by taking this decision. Members will be aware that we have changed our collection systems over the past few years and have thereby managed to hugely increase our recycling levels to the current high level of 54%, whilst reducing the amount going to landfill.

I am confident that the proposals will not have a major impact on the council's landfill targets or its recycling levels.

It is very important to emphasise that this council is still very keen to increase the recycling of all waste as much as possible for the sake of the environment and we will continue to work hard to find new and innovative ways to enhance our recycling levels.

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We firmly believe that simply dumping food waste in either a garden waste bin or a residual waste bin is not the best way to tackle this issue. It is important that we all take responsibility for reducing the amount of food that is wasted and not just rely on an easy outlet to throw food away. Food waste starts to release gases into the atmosphere as soon as it starts to decay, so the less food waste we produce the better. It is expensive to waste food both for the household economy and for tax payers. Wasting food costs the average household £480 per year, rising to £680 for a family with children, the equivalent of around £60 a month. That's a lot of food and a lot of money!

The best way to control food waste is by using food waste reduction techniques and home composting, which are recognised as the preferred methods for minimising and managing all food waste. Home composting saves money and energy and provides free garden compost year after year. Home composting is an easy way to manage this waste and produce compost for free. Food composters, wormeries and standard composters take food and garden waste and break it down into high quality compost. We support the work done by the wide range of partners who work with the Herts Waste Partnership and UK initiatives such as [www.lovefoodhatewaste.com](http://www.lovefoodhatewaste.com). These methods are far better than recycling and they have the smallest environmental impact and this council will be actively promoting these methods in campaigns during the year.

I would also like to remind colleagues that our survey did show that in fact over 65% of food waste is currently being put into the black residual waste bins, so we know this change will materially not impact the majority of our residents or our landfill targets. However, I want to stress that we will continually review our position with a view to implementing a food waste collection.

So colleagues, to sum up, I am proposing that we introduce a charge of £35 per annum for the first bin, per property, with effect from April 2017. This works out at under 70 pence per week, which is excellent value for money, when compared with charges being made by other councils up and down the country. Some councils are charging up to £90 with the average charge being over £40.

The really important message I want to deliver to everyone is that if we don't do this, we are going to have to either put up charges for some other council services, or we are simply going to have to stop providing either this service or another one. I am sure none of us wish to cut any of our current services, which are highly valued by our residents and would much rather introduce a charge for this service, than see it disappear.

I hope that members will agree with me on this and support the proposal before you in recommendation 2 of the report."

The Cabinet agreed that Recommendation 2.1.7 in the report:-

"Cabinet recommends to Council the approval of any consequential amendments to the Waste Management Plan and any other council policies necessary to incorporate the above."

be amended to read as follows:-

“That authority be delegated to the Executive Director (Resources, Environment and Cultural Services), in consultation with the Executive Member (Environment), to make any consequential amendments to the Waste Management Plan and any other Council policies necessary to implement the new garden waste collection system.”

RESOLVED:  
(unanimous)

- (1) That having fully considered all relevant matters, the Cabinet:-
  - (a) notes the key findings of the consultation.
  - (b) agrees to the introduction of a charge for the existing garden waste collection service.
  - (c) agrees the following collection policies and operational procedures in connection with this garden waste collection service:-
    - (i) those who did not join the chargeable garden waste collection service would not have their garden waste collected.
    - (ii) those who joined the chargeable garden waste collection service would not be able to present kitchen food waste in this bin.
    - (iii) black refuse bins would not be collected if garden waste was presented in this bin.
    - (iv) food waste could temporarily be re-directed to the black refuse bin, until such time as an alternative collection and treatment solution be found.
    - (v) all of the Council's other existing collection requirements under Section 46 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 would apply to all waste collections.
- (2) That the Cabinet recommends the Council to approve a one-off capital budget of £100,000 required for implementation of changes to the waste collection system and that this is added to the 2016/17 capital programme.
- (3) That the Cabinet recommends the Council to set the charge for the garden waste collection service at £35 per annum for the first

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bin per property and at £60 per annum for the second bin per property, commencing in the new financial year 2017/2018.

- (4) That the Cabinet recommends the Council to delegate authority to the Executive Director (Resources, Environment and Cultural Services), in consultation with the Executive Member (Environment), to make any consequential amendments to the Waste Management Plan and any other Council policies necessary to implement the new garden waste collection system.

Meeting ended 7.47pm  
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