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Please ask for:
Graham Seal

PLEASE NOTE TIME

22 December 2016

Dear Councillor

You are requested to attend a meeting of the WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL CABINET to be held on Monday 9 January 2017 at **6.30pm** in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, The Campus, Welwyn Garden City, Herts, AL8 6AE.

Yours faithfully



Executive Director
Public Protection, Planning and Governance

**A G E N D A
PART 1**

1. **APOLOGIES**

2. **MINUTES**

To confirm as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 6 December 2016 (previously circulated).

3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS**

To note declarations of Members' disclosable pecuniary interests, non-disclosable pecuniary interests and non-pecuniary interests in respect of items on the Agenda.

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

To consider the following item:-

- (a) Future Garden Waste Collection (Forward Plan Reference FP778)
(Pages 3 - 14)

Report of the Executive Director on options for the review of future garden waste collection.

Circulation: Councillors J Dean (Leader) M Perkins (Deputy Leader)
D Bell B Sarson
H Bromley R Trigg
T Kingsbury

Executive Board
Press and Public (except Part II Items)

If you require any further information about this Agenda please contact Graham Seal, Governance Services Unit on 01707 357444 or email – g.seal@welhat.gov.uk

Part I

Item No: 4(a)

Main authors: Durk Reyner/Kirsten Roberts

Executive Member: Helen Bromley

All Wards

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL

SPECIAL CABINET - 9 JANUARY 2017

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR (RESOURCES, ENVIRONMENT AND CULTURAL SERVICES)

FUTURE GARDEN WASTE COLLECTION

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 Members will be aware that the council's budgets have been under immense pressure over the past few years, mainly due to the essential austerity measures introduced by the previous and current governments.
- 1.2 The Council's core government funding has been halved to £4m in 16/17, and we understand that this grant will be reduced further by £1.5m or 37% by the end of the decade. Although the council has a proven track record of delivering efficiencies (£11m of savings have been made since 2010) we continue to be faced with significant financial pressures, with reducing scope to find further savings without impacting on frontline services. To put this into context, we will need to make £2m of savings in the medium term in order to balance our books.
- 1.3 The council is therefore continuing to review all services with a view to making further efficiencies by either cutting expenditure or increasing income, and it is within this context that the garden waste collection service is being reviewed
- 1.4 Throughout November 2016, the council consulted with the public on the perceived value of the service and on different charging options for future garden waste collections. The objective of the consultation was to gauge whether, when given the option, residents would prefer to pay a charge for the existing collection of garden waste, or discontinue the service, in light of the financial savings that the council is required to make.
- 1.5 4,516 responses were received and the results of the survey are detailed in Appendix 1.
- 1.6 A summary of the key objections and comments made, and questions asked by the respondents is attached in Appendices 2 and 3 for Members' full information.
- 1.7 Members will see from the responses received and from the considerable press and public comment that this is not a popular proposal. However, it is important for Members to give full, detailed and objective consideration to all aspects of this proposal, including the impact on the council's budget, and consequent impact on other services, of not introducing this service change.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that, having fully considered all relevant matters:
- 2.1.1 Cabinet notes the key findings of the consultation
- 2.1.2 Cabinet agrees to the introduction of a charge for the existing garden waste collection service.
- 2.1.3 Cabinet recommends to 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.
- 2.1.4 Cabinet recommends to the Council to set a charge for the garden waste collection service of £35 for the first bin per property per annum and £60 for the second bin per property per annum, commencing in the new financial year 2017/2018.
- 2.1.5 The Cabinet agrees the following collection policies and operational procedures in connection with this garden waste collection service:
- a) Those who do not join the chargeable garden waste collection service will not have their garden waste collected
 - b) Those who join the chargeable garden waste collection service will not be able to present kitchen food waste in this bin
 - c) Black refuse bins will not be collected if garden waste is presented in this bin
 - d) Food waste may temporarily be re-directed to the black refuse bin, until such time as an alternative collection and treatment solution can be found
- 2.1.6 All other Council's existing collection requirements under Section 46 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 will apply to all waste collections.
- 2.1.7 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.

3 Explanation

Background

- 3.1 A garden waste collection service was first introduced in 2001 and residents were charged a fee for the purchase and collection of sacks. In 2005, a service was rolled out to provide brown wheelie bins for those that opted into the garden waste collection scheme and a charge was still applied for the purchase and collection of sacks. This scheme continued to be popular and was rolled out further across the Borough in 2007 and again when the alternate refuse and recycling collection (ARRC) service was introduced in 2011.
- 3.2 The collection of garden waste is a service for which a charge can be made by the council. Therefore, in the light of the continuing financial pressures facing the council, this is an area that should be given serious consideration for the

introduction of a charge in line with many other councils across the country. Currently over 50% of English councils charge for this service, with many more in the process of contemplating introducing a charge in the forthcoming years.

- 3.3 If the Council introduces an annual charge of £35 for the collection of garden waste, it is anticipated that a minimum of £400,000 net income per annum would accrue which will be used to offset the costs of operating this service, currently around £1.1m per annum.
- 3.4 Any charge for this service would be optional for all residents which will mean that only those who "opt in" to the service by paying the annual charge, will have their garden waste collected by the council. It would not apply to those residents who choose not to use the service, for example, those who live in flats, who do not have a garden, or prefer to use another disposal method.
- 3.5 Residents who do not wish to use the service will be able take their garden waste to one of Hertfordshire County Council's (HCC) Household Waste and Recycling Centres (HWRCs), and home composting will also be promoted.

Food Waste

- 3.6 Composition audits undertaken on residents' bins indicate that the amount of food waste collected within the brown bin is relatively low, compared to the amount of garden waste collected and the majority of food waste generated is still disposed of in the black refuse bin. The latest survey data for the Borough indicated that over 65% of food waste is being put into the black (residual) waste bins.
- 3.7 The council cannot make a charge for the collection of food waste which means that if a charge for the garden waste service is introduced, residents will have to divert their food waste to the black bin for the time being.
- 3.8 However, the council will carry out a review of the various food collection methods adopted by other councils and will look to implement the most effective and efficient collection method as soon as is practicable.
- 3.9 Food waste reduction and home composting are recognised as the preferred methods for residents to minimise and manage any food waste generated as these have the smallest environmental impact, and this will also be promoted in campaigns by the council.

Consultation

- 3.10 The council has consulted with the public on different charging options for future garden waste collections. A total of 4,516 responses were received. Further details of how the consultation was carried out and an overview of the consultation outcome is summarised in Appendix 1.
- 3.11 The option to continue the service, with no charge being introduced, was not presented in the Council's consultation because the objective of the council's consultation was to gauge whether, when given the option, residents would prefer to pay a charge for the existing collection of garden waste, or discontinue the service, in light of the financial savings that the council is required to make.

- 3.12 In addition to residents responding to the council's consultation, there was an "alternative survey", emails to Councillors and officers, comment on social media forums (e.g. Twitter and Facebook), a Welwyn Hatfield Times Twitter poll and representations made in person. These 'informal' communications strongly expressed a preference for the current service to remain, and this should be given due weight by members when making their decision on how to proceed.
- 3.13 A summary of key objections received by residents is provided in Appendix 2.
- 3.14 Frequently Asked Questions are provided in Appendix 3 which will be continually reviewed and updated throughout the implementation and roll-out of the scheme, should this be agreed.
- 3.15 In view of the consultation responses, it is recommended that a charge of £35 for the first bin per property per annum is introduced which will optimise participation in the scheme.
- 3.16 The consultation responses indicated that some residents would be willing to pay for an additional brown bin. Therefore with this in mind, residents will have the opportunity to apply for a second brown bin to help them recycle more of their garden waste, if needed. The subscription for the second bin should be set at £60. This subscription is to offset the additional costs a second bin would impose on the service. If a large number of residents purchased a second bin, further resource e.g. another collection vehicle and crew would be required to best deliver this optional additional service.

Data Management System (In-Cab):

- 3.17 Subject to cabinet agreeing to the introduction of a charge for this service, this report also makes a request for additional budget in this financial year 2016/17 to enable these changes to progress, should they be required. This would enable a subscription service to commence in the next financial year (2017/18) and cabinet is being asked to make a recommendation to the council for this additional budget.
- 3.18 A one-off capital budget of £100,000 will allow officers to develop the necessary data management system required to improve data management. The data management system would enable the council to hold an electronic database (in-cab) for those residents that subscribe to a chargeable garden waste service.
- 3.19 The in-cab system will also allow collection crews to report real time information from the collection rounds to the Contact Centre. For example, crews would be able to report whether a bin has not been collected, for example if it was not out on boundary, found to be contaminated or had side waste left by the bin etc. This information could be relayed to the Contact Centre soon after a road had been attended. There would be a significant improvement to the way this information is currently managed and relayed back to the Contact Centre.

Implications

4 Legal Implication(s)

- 4.1 In line with The Controlled Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2012, garden waste is a household waste for which a collection charge can be made.

5 Financial Implication(s)

- 5.1 The procurement and implementation of an in-cab system will require a one-off capital expenditure. This is a new project and is not on the current capital programme and therefore a capital budget of £100k in 2016/17 is required. The capital budget is also required for integration of the in-cab technology with the council's payment system. There are other mobilisation costs associated with the introduction of a chargeable service, but these will be contained within existing budgets.
- 5.2 If the Council introduces a charge of £35 per annum for the collection of garden waste, it is anticipated that a minimum of £400,000 net income could be generated per annum, which will be used to offset the costs of operating this service, currently £1.1m per annum.
- 5.3 The Council receives funding from Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) based on its waste performance e.g. waste reduction, recycling and diversion from landfill. This is through a financial mechanism called the Alternative Financial Model (AFM), which returns some of the savings which the county council receives from the reduction in overall waste collected from all councils in Hertfordshire. The introduction of a garden waste charge will impact upon the level of funding the council receives through the AFM. For example, as it is anticipated that a small proportion of food waste may be disposed of this may reduce the amount of funding received. The actual sums involved are unknown at present, but it is anticipated, on balance, that the impact of the changes to payments from the AFM from the county would be relatively small in comparison to the reduced net costs for providing the garden waste service.

6 Risk Management Implications

- 6.1 The key risk is that if the recommendation to introduce a garden waste charge is not agreed, that the garden waste collection service will be discontinued, based on the need to bridge the council's funding gap.
- 6.2 If the recommendations are agreed, a full project risk register will be developed for the implementation and roll-out of the scheme.

7 Security & Terrorism Implication(s)

- 7.1 There are no known security and terrorism implications associated with this recommendation.

8 Procurement Implication(s)

- 8.1 Any procurement required will be undertaken in line with Council's procurement rules.

9 Climate Change Implication(s)

- 9.1 The introduction of a garden waste collection charge will allow the council to maintain a high recycling rate, whilst continuing to divert garden waste from landfill.
- 9.2 Food waste may be re-directed to the black refuse bin, until such time as an alternative collection and treatment solution can be found. This will slightly increase the amount of waste disposed of through landfill or energy recovery. However, food waste prevention and home composting will also be promoted to reduce the impact on climate change.

10 Link to Corporate Priorities

- 10.1 The subject of this report is linked to the following Council's Corporate Priorities:
- Protect and Enhance the Environment;
 - Help build a Strong Local Economy; and
 - Engage with our Communities and Provide Value for Money.

11 Equality and Diversity

- 11.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out in connection with the proposals that are set out in this report and no significant differential impacts were found. The proposed charge has been set at a level which the council believes will ensure this service is affordable for all household groups. In addition, residents on the assisted waste collection will continue to receive garden waste collections as previously agreed if they choose to subscribe to the service.

Name of authors	Durk Reyner and Kirsten Roberts
Title	<i>Head of Environment and Community and Environment Manager</i>
Date	December 2016

Background papers to be listed (if applicable)

None

Appendix 1: Consultation Overview

- 1.1 The consultation opened on the 1st November and closed 4 weeks later on the 28th November.
- 1.2 The objective of the consultation was to gauge whether, when, given the option, would residents prefer to pay a charge for the existing collection of garden waste, or discontinue the service, in light of the financial savings that the Council is required to make.
- 1.3 Residents were made aware of the consultation through the Council's Life magazine, website, text message service, Facebook and Twitter and through local media. Local community groups and charities were also made aware of the consultation. The consultation was hosted online through SurveyMonkey and hard copies were also made available.
- 1.4 The key findings of the Council's consultation response is as follows:

Total number of responses received	4,516
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Number of respondents who use existing garden waste collection service		
Yes	No	Did not answer question
97%	2%	1%

How the current brown bin service is rated					
					Did not answer question
Very Good	Good	Average	Poor	Very Poor	
37%	37%	19%	3%	1%	3%

Ways in which residents dispose of their garden waste			
	Household Waste and Recycling Centre (HWRC)	Other	Did not answer question
Home Compost			
27%	22%	11%	40%

Willingness to pay for garden waste collections		
Proportion of residents prepared to pay subscription rather than see service discontinued	Proportion of residents who would prefer to see the service discontinued	Did not answer question
35%	31%	34%

- 54% of those that answered the question stated that they would prefer to pay a subscription rather than see the service discontinued.

How likely residents would pay, if the following annual charges are introduced			
	£35	£50	£70
Very Likely	22%	5%	2%
Likely	20%	9%	5%
Unlikely	10%	14%	10%
Very Unlikely	48%	72%	83%

How likely residents would be willing to pay for an additional bin				
Very Likely	Likely	Unlikely	Very Unlikely	Did not answer question
5%	10%	12%	61%	12%

1.5 For those who said they would not use a chargeable service, residents indicated that they would manage their garden waste in the following ways (please note that it was stated that garden waste could not be put in the black bin and more than one option could be ticked in the response):

- 49% - take the waste to the Household Waste Recycling Centre (the Tip);
- 48% - they would use other means;
- 23% - would use their garden, home composter or allotment;
- 4% - indicated they would use an alternative chargeable service.

1.6 Just over 1,800 people (40%) provided comments under 'other means' on how respondents would get rid of their garden waste and/or their views on the proposal of discontinuing the service or charging a subscription. The commentary was analysed and below is a summary of opinions: (NB. more than one option could be given):

- Other (28%)
- Dump it (24%);
- Burn the garden waste (19%);
- They would put it the black landfill bin (17%);
- What do I pay my Council Tax for? (10%);
- Food waste concerns (4%).

1.7 Some of the views under 'other' included "I am elderly"; "I have no car"; "what do I do with my shredded paper"; "money is made from the compost waste"; "I cannot afford it" and "I don't know what else I could do with my garden waste".

Appendix 2: Summary of Key Objections and Frequently Asked Questions

The table below further highlights the key objections and concerns raised by residents, as part of the consultation exercise, with an additional commentary providing further clarification or explaining how these will be addressed.

Key Concern/Question raised by Residents	Summary
Cost of the brown bin already paid for by Council Tax.	Council Tax does not cover the full cost of the Council's waste collection services. The existing garden waste service costs in the region of £1.1million per annum to operate and this is subsidised by the Council. If savings cannot be made through the introduction of a charge, there is the risk that this service will be discontinued.
No option to continue with the service as it is in the consultation.	The objective of the consultation was to gauge whether, when, given the option, would residents prefer to pay a charge for the collection of garden waste, or discontinue the service, in light of the financial savings that the Council is required to make.
Food waste	<p>Food waste may be re-directed into the black refuse bin.</p> <p>A focussed campaign for food waste reduction and home composting will be rolled out.</p> <p>Options for the collection and management of food waste will be kept under regular review, for example when service contracts are re-tendered.</p>
Fly-tipping	<p>There is a concern that fly-tipping will increase if a charge is introduced. Other Councils that have introduced a charge have not noticed a significant increase in fly-tipping from garden waste, although it is accepted that fly-tipping is increasing on a national scale.</p> <p>Fly-tipping will be investigated and cleared in line with existing environmental policies. Enforcement action will be taken against those caught fly-tipping.</p>
HWRCS do not accept garden waste	Green garden waste can be recycled at all HWRCS within Hertfordshire (in the green waste containers).
Reduced income for	HCC or local councils within Hertfordshire do not receive income from the sale of compost produced

compost	at contracted facilities.
Refuse bins will be too small to accommodate additional waste	<p>Residents will not be permitted to put garden waste in their black refuse bin.</p> <p>It is anticipated that the standard refuse bin has adequate capacity to temporarily store more food waste and residents will be advised on ways to reduce food waste and will be encouraged to take up home composting.</p>

Appendix 3

I already pay council tax, why is the council consulting on charging for garden waste collections?

We have some very tough choices to make in finding ways to bridge our funding gap. Central government is reducing our financial settlement a further 37% by 2019/20, adding to the year on year reductions seen since austerity measures began. Over that time we have worked hard to deliver efficiencies without impacting on services but, facing a budget gap of £2m, we have no choice but to find alternative ways of funding services, or cutting them completely.

Council tax is a statutory charge based on the occupation and ownership of a property. It helps pay for our services, but we only get to keep 13% of what's collected. The rest goes to Hertfordshire County Council, the police and town and parish councils.

Local authorities do not bill residents only for the services they make use of. Nor do they make deductions from council tax based on non-use of a particular service, or when additional charges or fees are introduced.

Why isn't there an option in the survey to continue the service as it is?

Putting proposals forward for savings is never easy. The brown bin collection service, which not all residents use, is under review.

The aim of our consultation is to understand whether people would continue to use the service if there was a charge.

But why this service, why not find savings elsewhere?

We continually look at everything we do, including whether it's appropriate to introduce, or increase, charges for some services. Many people in Welwyn Hatfield don't use the brown bin service, or use it irregularly.

For those that do, we would like to hear what they think about us continuing the service for an annual fee and how much they think that should be.

What about food waste?

If a subscription service was introduced, you would initially be asked to wrap your food waste and use the black refuse bin.

We will be re-tendering our existing waste and recycling contract for 2020 onwards and that will give us an opportunity to review the different options for food waste collection. In the meantime, changes to waste processing costs may provide an opportunity to introduce a financially sustainable alternative much sooner.

Won't this increase the amount of waste going to landfill and/or fly-tipping?

Over half of councils in the England are charging for garden waste collections, including Three Rivers in Hertfordshire, and there is no evidence to indicate a rise in fly-tipping, or waste being sent to landfill. Whatever the outcome, we will work to ensure garden waste continues to be disposed of responsibly.

How much money will the council make from this?

We face some tough decisions in the years ahead to bridge our funding gap. Central government is reducing our financial settlement a further 37% by 2019/20, adding to the year on year reductions seen since austerity measures began. This consultation is not about raising income for the council, but potentially offsetting the costs of providing this much valued service, which was introduced in 2007.

What can I do with my shredded paper?

Shredded paper can now go into the blue lidded recycling bin and placed in the newspaper recycling caddy or the main part of the recycling bin.

What will happen to my brown bin if I don't subscribe to the new garden waste service?

Initially, the Council would not take back the brown bins as they were assigned to a property. This will give householders a chance to consider the benefits of the new service and allow a person to subscribe and take up the service quickly. The Council would then later in the year consider collecting brown bins from households that don't want to use the service.