

**Public  
Key Decision - No**

## **HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**Title/Subject Matter:** Household Garden Waste Subscription Service – Update  
**Meeting/Date:** Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Environment, Communities and Partnerships) – 7th March 2024  
**Executive Portfolio:** Cllr Simone Taylor – Executive Councillor for Leisure, Waste and Street Scene  
**Report by:** Andrew Rogan, General Manager for Operations  
**Ward(s) affected:** All

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### **Executive Summary:**

Since the approval by the Cabinet on 24th August 2023 to implement a chargeable garden waste subscription service a number of areas of work have been delivered. These include extensive consultation with Town and Parish Councils and community groups, the development and implementation of an automated Direct Debit system, the procurement of a supplier to distribute stickers and information packs to subscribers and the development of a range of community initiatives.

This report provides an update on the work and level of subscription uptake across the district. In addition, the report sets out the forthcoming campaigns to raise awareness about the change in service and how residents will be supported through this period.

### **Recommendation(s):**

- a) that an update to the actuals against forecast subscriptions numbers of householders and income be noted;
- b) that an update on the operational impacts for a chargeable garden waste collection service be noted;
- c) that an update on the implementation of community initiatives, supported by the engagement activities in September 2023 with Town and Parish Councils and community groups be noted; and
- d) that an update to the Communications Plan to support all residents understand and take action regarding the change in service from 1st April 2024 be noted.

## 1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 This report seeks to provide the Overview and Scrutiny Panel with an update on the key implementations of the Garden Waste Subscription Service, further to the approval to proceed at the Cabinet meeting on 24th August 2023.

## 2. FINANCIAL POSITION AND ANALYSIS

2.1 The Cabinet approved the implementation of a chargeable garden waste subscription service on the basis of the following financial modelling

Table 1 - Financial projection of the chargeable garden service, including potential contribution to County.

<b>Income &amp; Expenditure Statement</b>					
<b>Proposed Garden Waste Subscription, Business Case basis</b>					
	<b>2023/24</b>	<b>2024/25</b>	<b>2025/26</b>	<b>2026/27</b>	<b>2027/28</b>
<b>Income:</b>					
1st chargeable bin <sup>[1]</sup>	0	(1,380,000)	(1,840,000)	(2,300,000)	(2,300,000)
2nd chargeable bin <sup>[2]</sup>	(172,040)	(86,400)	(86,400)	(86,400)	(86,400)
Chargeable income	(172,040)	(1,466,400)	(1,926,400)	(2,386,400)	(2,386,400)
Remove existing MTFS second bin assumption <sup>[3]</sup>	172,040	205,000	205,000	205,000	205,000
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(1,261,400)</b>	<b>(1,721,400)</b>	<b>(2,181,400)</b>	<b>(2,181,400)</b>
<b>Expenditure:</b>					
Staff cost savings <sup>[4]</sup>	0	(318,580)	(238,935)	(159,290)	(159,290)
Fuel cost savings <sup>[5]</sup>	0	(81,089)	(60,816)	(40,544)	(40,544)
Call centre staff <sup>[6]</sup>	0	35,000	35,000	35,000	35,000
Annual billing <sup>[7]</sup>	0	20,000	30,000	40,000	40,000
Transaction fees, card payment <sup>[8]</sup>	0	27,600	36,800	46,000	46,000
Administration - staff <sup>[9]</sup>	0	31,519	31,519	31,519	31,519
Annual renewals <sup>[10]</sup>	0	28,320	37,760	47,200	47,200
Community Initiatives <sup>[11]</sup>	0	200,000	200,000	200,000	200,000
Potential contribution for losses to CCC, unconfirmed	0	198,000	264,000	330,000	330,000
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>140,770</b>	<b>335,328</b>	<b>529,885</b>	<b>529,885</b>
<b>Net (Surplus)/deficit</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(1,120,630)</b>	<b>(1,386,072)</b>	<b>(1,651,515)</b>	<b>(1,651,515)</b>
Implementation costs <sup>[12]</sup>	0	849,601	0	0	0
<b>Net adjustment to prior year MTFS - (benefit)/adverse</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(271,029)</b>	<b>(1,386,072)</b>	<b>(1,651,515)</b>	<b>(1,651,515)</b>
<b>Total all years - (benefit)/adverse</b>	<b>(4,960,133)</b>				

2.2 Following the implementation of an automated Direct Debit system, residents were able to subscribe to the service from 5th December 2023.

2.3 Residents were incentivised to sign-up early (before the beginning of February 2024) to allow sufficient time to plan the scheduling, crews and vehicles required for the changeover of service from 1<sup>st</sup> April. Residents who signed up by Wednesday 31st January 2024 were able to take advantage of an Early Bird offer where the cost of the first bin was £50. If residents chose to pay for the service by Direct Debit, the reduced price was fixed for a minimum of three years.

- 2.4 Weekly monitoring of the subscription numbers shows that the expected first chargeable bin revenue for financial year 2024/25 is above target, with approximately 2/3 of residents subscribing by Direct Debit (See Appendix 1 for most recent figures)

### **3. OPERATIONAL DELIVERY**

- 3.1 The chargeable garden waste subscription service built on the current service offered to residents whereby the bin collection rounds operate fortnightly. Residents have the option to pay for an additional bin(s) and are issued with a sticker to place on the back of their bin to evidence the payment.
- 3.2 The modelling of new separate garden waste rounds for customers *could* result in some changes to collection days. It is acknowledged that this may create some confusion for residents in the early phase of the delivery. To mitigate the impacts to the current schedule and bins rounds, the Early Bird discount secured 23.6k confirmed households subscribing to the service by the end of January 2023. The Waste Management Service is now working with a specialist waste round mapping company to create the new rounds with as few changes as possible to current collection days and to ensure routes are optimised for efficiency. The approved routes and schedules will be confirmed in February 2024 allowing time to notify any impacted residents directly. Extensive communications will be promoted throughout March 2024 about any changes to schedules with the introduction of a new bin calendar for financial year 2024/25 allowing residents to check their scheduled collection beyond 1<sup>st</sup> April.

### **4. SERVICE DESIGN**

- 4.1 Since making the new service available to residents to subscribe, weekly analysis of the data has been undertaken to enable an effective response to any barriers in the process and to be able to improve communications in local areas. As a result of the weekly analysis, a number of conclusions can be drawn:
- There is a shift in the channel of contact to the Council from telephone to online services as seen through the number of residents accessing the online subscription form versus the number of transactional calls to the Contact centre. (See Appendix 1) This is supportive of the Council's intent to be digital first in design and delivery of our services.
  - The geographical mapping of subscriptions volumes across the district is relatively uniform, with all postcode areas reporting a minimum subscription percentage of eligible households as 30%.
  - The highest number of calls received to the Contact centre are on a Monday (compared to other days of the week) and on average 50% of calls are received between 09:00 and 12:00, allowing the optimisation of resources in Customer services to meet this known demand in call volumes.
- 4.2 In addition to the changes in service, a number of community initiatives were tested and developed with community representatives, ensuring

residents were fully supported to continue with their commitments to compost and recycle green waste.

- 4.3 Engagement activities were undertaken with Town and Parish Councils and community groups throughout September 2023. The findings of the engagement sessions were presented to Overview and Scrutiny Panel on 2nd November 2023.
- 4.4 In total 33 local councils (towns or parishes) were represented across the 4 sessions, with a total of 58 representatives actively inputting into the viability and support considerations required for a number of proposed initiatives. On the basis of the views and comments received the following community initiatives will be available from the 1st April 2024:
- **Saturday Freighters** – a schedule over a 4-week period of vehicles every Saturday between the months of April and September in prearranged locations across the district. This schedule will be kept under active review to ensure they meet resident need, and do not cause any unintended disruption.
  - **For parishes not included on the 4-weekly schedule** – the Council will contact outlying Parish Councils, not included on the 4-week schedule, to offer them up to 10 community bins, free of charge, to be hosted at a community location of their choice. These bins will be accessible for local residents to use to deposit their garden waste and will be collected as part of the normal route scheduling for fortnightly garden waste collections.
  - **Parish Council allocation for land management** - Parish Councils can request free of charge bins, which they can allocate to residents to support them maintaining local green spaces in their communities.
  - **Subsidised price home composters** – in addition to the current offer of 'buy one and get a second half price', HDC will seek to offer residents a subsidised price on the purchase of their first compost bin.
  - **Free loose compost** – working with Town and Parish Councils, along with Allotment Associations, HDC will promote the availability of locations to collect free compost. In addition the Waste Minimisation team will support residents to engage with composting in their community and promote Compost Awareness Week (first full week of May 2024)
- 4.5 The Council will continue to monitor both the materials picked up as fly-tipping using a reporting mechanism called "WasteDataFlow" to inform government of the levels and nature of waste along with enforcement actions taken therefore close monitoring will be undertaken to determine any changes to fly-tipping patterns.
- 4.6 The Council will continue to monitor and actively respond to any variances in changes through ongoing reviews of the waste tonnages, and direct communication and waste minimisation activity to respond to ensure waste is managed in the most effective manner going forward. Collections will also inform the service design to accommodate the requirements of the DEFRA waste reforms, anticipated to be needed from 2026.

4.7 The County Council have confirmed that the principal to charge districts has been established but as yet the details have not been developed. The Chief Executive is awaiting a timetable from the County Council.

## 5. KEY IMPACTS / RISKS AND MITIGATIONS

5.1 **Communications** – the most significant risk to the new garden waste subscription service is the impact to residents, and therefore Customer Services, either because residents are unaware of the change in service or because they are unaware of any potential change in collection days/weeks.

5.2 A robust Communication Plan has been approved by the project board detailing the key messages for residents about the changes to service, the channels through which they will be promoted, and the schedule of key messages. These key messages include but are not limited to:

- Residents can subscribe and pay the annual charge throughout the year (not limited to subscribing before 1st April)
- Residents not wishing to subscribe and want to have their bin removed can notify HDC through the form on the website (only empty garden waste bins can be removed)
- Advice on how residents can reduce the volume of waste they generate through behavioural change.

5.3 Based on the successful campaign of bin hangers over November/December 2023, a similar approach will be used to inform all residents about the changes in garden waste collection.

5.4 The HDC website has a significant number of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) which are regularly reviewed and updated with Customer Services, determined by the type and frequency of enquiry that they respond to.

5.5 To meet demand for the increased contacts (telephone, email, social media) the changes in service, an additional 5 temporary staff have been trained to answer all enquiries solely related to the garden waste subscription service. This has been managed through a dedicated telephone number for enquiries on garden waste subscriptions. This has managed the risk of increased demand to Customer Services on the generic contact telephone number.

5.6 The significant percentage of calls received on the dedicated line relate to supporting residents to subscribe to the service (transactional), with lower call volumes related to simple enquiries, complex enquiries or complaints (See Appendix 1)

## 6. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN, STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND/OR CORPORATE OBJECTIVES

[\(See Corporate Plan\)](#)

## **7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 If DEFRA mandate that garden waste collection should be collected free of charge from all domestic properties and is written in legislation, we would need to legally comply.

## **8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 Costs of implementing the change in service have been met through the income generated. This has covered resource costs and technology development implementation costs, along with specialist resource to deliver the work.

## **9. CONCLUSIONS**

- 9.1 The project resource to manage the changeover of service was introduced in April 2023. The early establishment of the project team has led to the success and robust management of the change, while allowing the key services in Operations to continue to deliver high quality Business As Usual services throughout this period.
- 9.2 The number of subscriptions to the new service has been positive and consistent. The introduction of an Early Bird discount has greatly increased the number of residents subscribing to the service early, ensuring that the scheduling and routing can be accurate and the risk of changes to residents is minimised.
- 9.3 A designated telephone line for garden waste subscriptions has ensured resources in the Contact centre can be well managed and training for staff can be specific and high quality. The lower number of calls received in the Contact centre compared to the interaction on the HDC website (for both subscriptions and information) demonstrates the increasing preference of residents to access Council services via online methods.

## **10. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED**

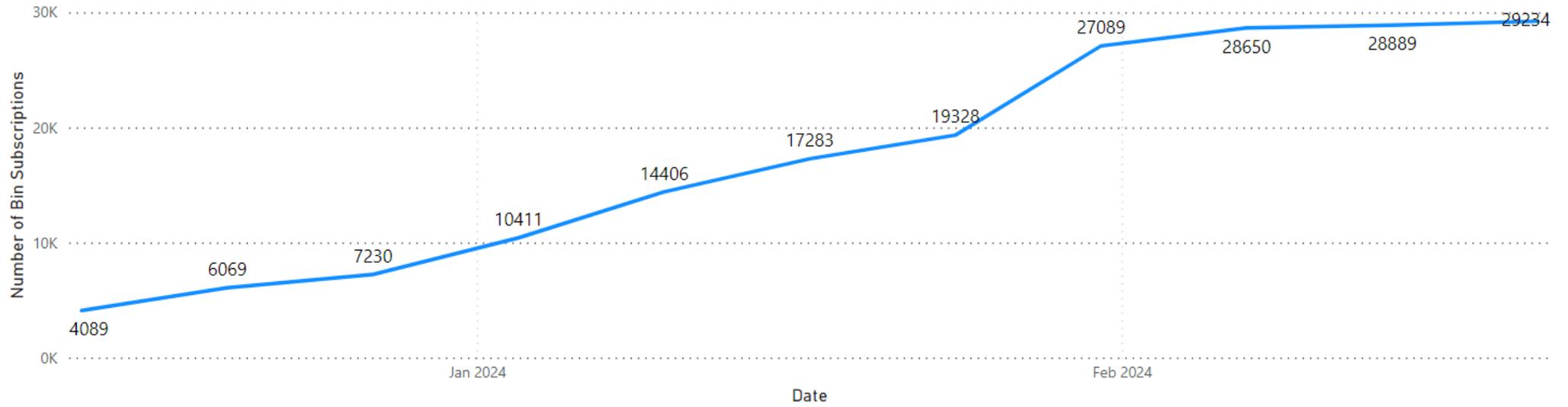
Appendix 1 - Analysis of garden waste subscriptions

### **CONTACT OFFICER**

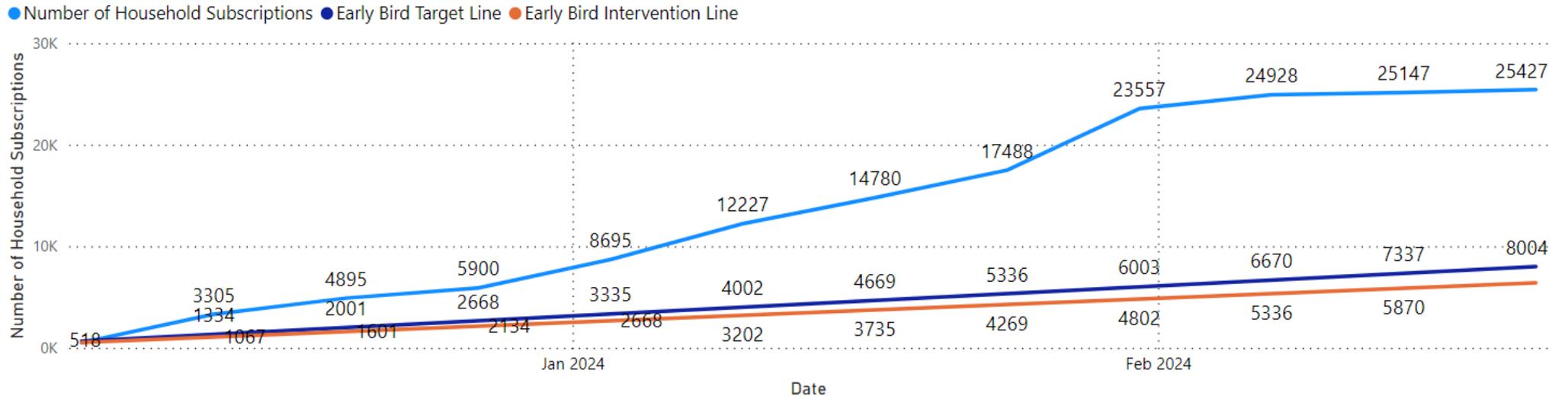
Name/Job Title: Andrew Rogan, General Manager Operations  
Email: andrew.rogan@huntingdonshire.gov.uk

## Appendix 1 – Analysis of garden waste subscriptions

### Cumulative total number of bin subscriptions by Date

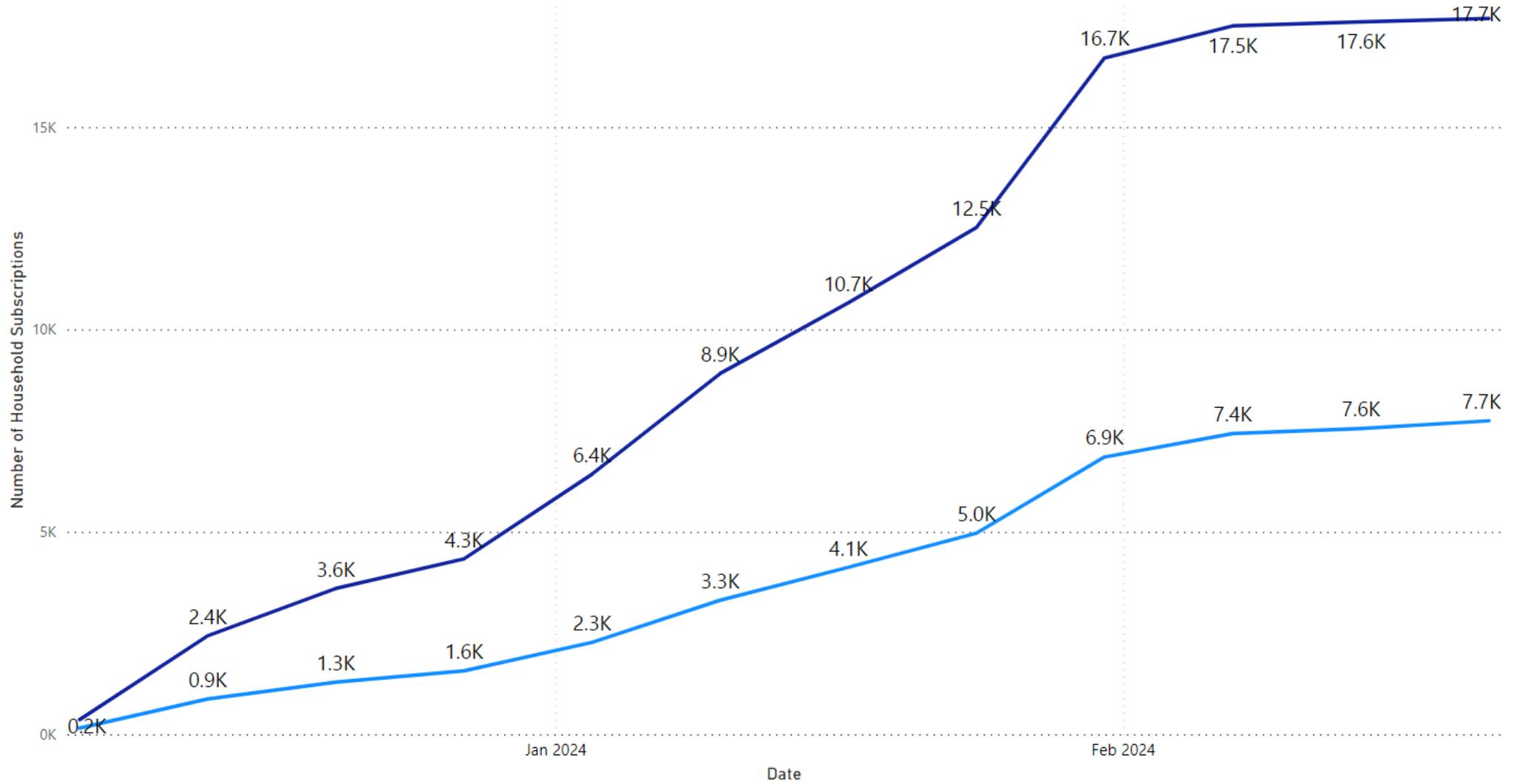


### Cumulative total number of household subscriptions by Date

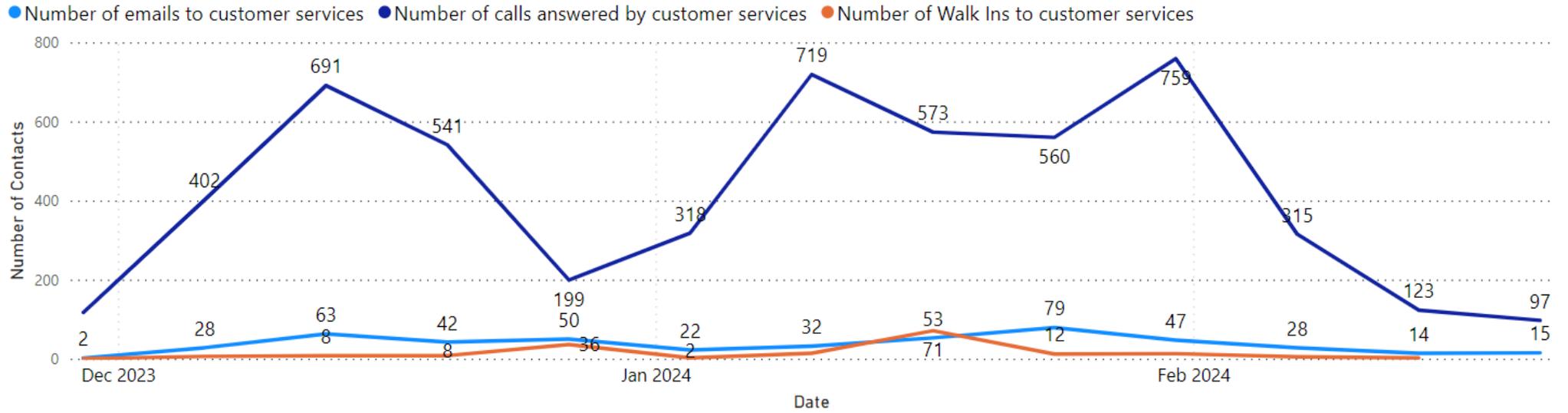


### Cumulative total number of subscriptions by payment type

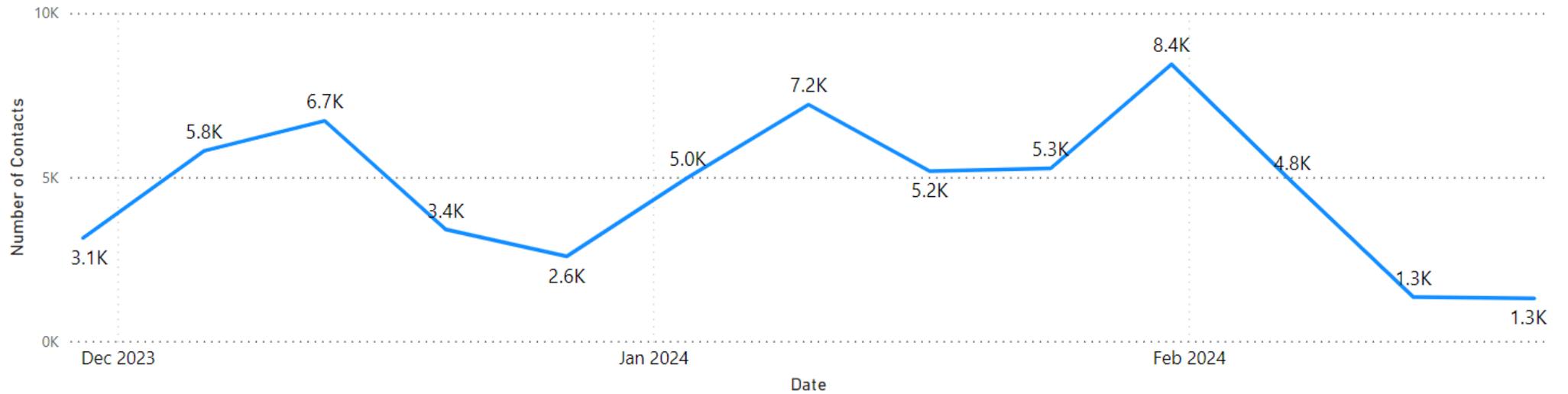
● Number of Household Subscriptions paid for by Card ● Number of Household Subscriptions paid for by Direct Debit



Number of emails, walk-ins and telephone calls per week by Date

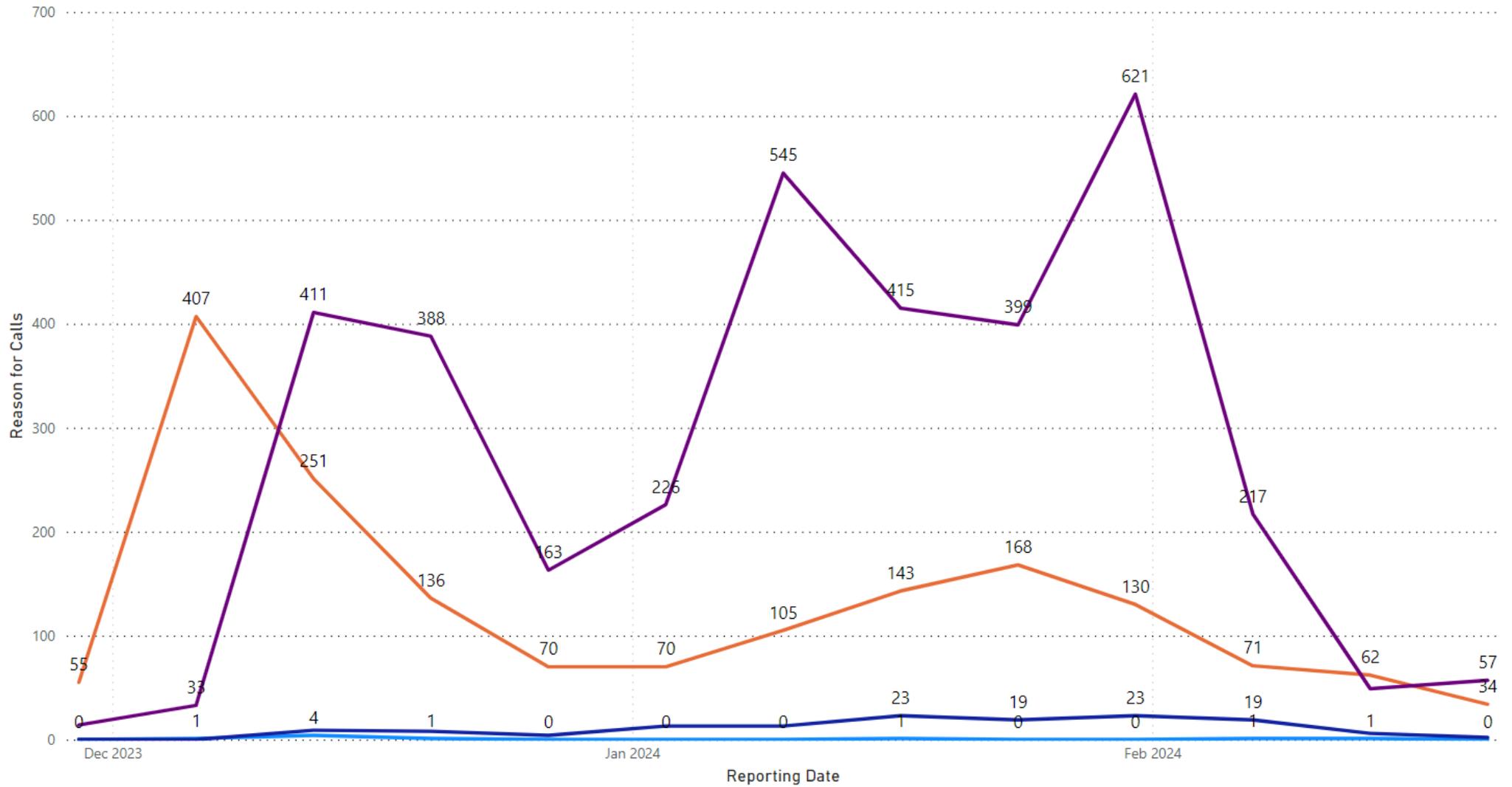


Number of web page views (all garden bins pages) per week by Date



### Reasons for Calls

● Complaint (Escalated to complaints) ● Complex Enquiry (Back Office Resolved) ● Simple Enquiry (CS resolved / information given) ● Transactional / Payment



# Calls by Weekday

● Mondays ● Tuesdays ● Wednesdays ● Thursdays ● Fridays

