

A meeting of the **CABINET** will be held in **CIVIC SUITE (LANCASTER/STIRLING ROOMS), PATHFINDER HOUSE, ST MARY'S STREET, HUNTINGDON, PE29 3TN** on **THURSDAY, 24 AUGUST 2023** at **7:00 PM** and you are requested to attend for the transaction of the following business:-

AGENDA

APOLOGIES

1. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

To receive from Members declarations as to disclosable pecuniary, other registerable and non-registerable interests in relation to any Agenda item. See Notes below.

Contact Officer: Democratic Services - (01480) 388169

2. CALL IN: GARDEN WASTE SUBSCRIPTION SERVICE (Pages 3 - 100)

The Cabinet is to discuss the Overview and Scrutiny call-in of the Household Garden Waste Subscription Service.

Executive Councillor: M A Hassall

Contact Officer: O Morley - 01480 388103

16 day of August 2023

Oliver Morley

Head of Paid Service

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and other Registerable and Non-Registerable Interests.

Further information on [Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and other Registerable and Non-Registerable Interests is available in the Council's Constitution](#)

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Please contact Democratic Services, Tel No: (01480) 388169 / e-mail: Democratic.Services@huntingdonshire.gov.uk if you have a general query on any Agenda Item, wish to tender your apologies for absence from the meeting, or would like information on any decision taken by the Committee/Panel.

Specific enquiries with regard to items on the Agenda should be directed towards the Contact Officer.

Members of the public are welcome to attend this meeting as observers except during consideration of confidential or exempt items of business.

Agenda and enclosures can be viewed on the [District Council's website](#).

Emergency Procedure

In the event of the fire alarm being sounded and on the instruction of the Meeting Administrator, all attendees are requested to vacate the building via the closest emergency exit.

Public
Key Decision - Yes

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: Garden Waste Subscription Service: Call-in Outcome

Meeting/Date: Cabinet – 24th August 2023

Executive Portfolio: Councillor M Hassall - Executive Councillor for Corporate and Shared Services

Report by: O Morley – Interim Managing Director

Wards affected: All

Executive Summary:

Following the call-in of the Cabinet's approval of the Garden Waste Subscription Service on 18th July 2023, the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Panel met to discuss the reasons for call-in. This report summarises the matters discussed and the conclusion reached.

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet is

RECOMMENDED

to consider the points as summarised and determine the recommendations contained in the report by the General Manger for Operations attached as Appendix A.

1.0 Background:

- 1.1 On 18th July 2023 the Cabinet approved a series of recommendations in relation to the introduction of a household garden waste subscription service. The decision was called-in by ten Members of the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Panel. The Joint Panel had been convened to consider and comment on the proposals prior to the Cabinet and the same Panel met on 10th August to consider the reasons for the call-in. This report summarises the matters discussed and the conclusion reached.

2.0 Deliberations:

- 2.1 The main areas for discussion were finance and consultation. Regarding financial aspects of the proposal, the following comments were made:
- A process had been established involving Joint Administration political groups to identify and examine options to improve the Council's financial position. The proposal to introduce a subscription service emerged from that process, though it was noted that it had been identified by officers as a potential option a number of years earlier;
 - The process did not identify any other options, therefore, without the subscription service it would be likely the Council would have to make service reductions. Executive Members preferred not to do this;
 - The Panel discussed that there was a difference between Appendix 5, the financial assumptions used in the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and the financial assumptions table in the original report to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel. It was established that the MTFS contained assumptions, but financial impact information had been received from the County Council after MTFS figures were approved by Cabinet in February 2023, that meant figures were updated in the Overview and Scrutiny Panel report which were not included in Appendix 5. It was suggested that the changes that have been made, the reasons for them and the implications for the Council should be reported to the cabinet when it considers the outcome of the call-in;
 - The sensitivity analysis showed the impact of lower take up but did not apply this to the financial assumption analysis. Given some other councils have experienced lower take up rates, the panel felt this should be done so that the Council could be fully aware of the implications;
 - Members asked a question about the 'breakeven point'. It was explained that the service seeks to cover its own costs. Therefore, if there are significantly lower levels of subscriptions than expected, proportionately fewer staff would be required and vehicles/fuel/insurance would be lower, meaning the service can be scaled up and down as determined by the numbers who subscribe. On this basis it is very difficult to determine a 'breakeven point' for the whole service.

- The cost of delaying the introduction of the service by one year would be £2 million;
- Should the uptake be lower than expected, there will still be a contribution to the MTFs, as opposed to a pressure to the MTFs, as there is currently;
- The financial predictions did not consider inflation;
- The projections do not include salary inflation but, at the same time, income from the Garden Waste Scheme will help to put the Council in a position where it can consider future salary increases.

2.2 The points made in relation to consultation are:

- Some Members of the Panel are of the view that the proposal is of such significance that it should be subject to public consultation. It is suggested that the consultation should seek views on alternative configurations of the service, such as increasing the period between collections. It is further argued that, given the absence within the Council of ideas for other ways to improve the Council's financial position, suggestions also should be requested in this respect.
- In response, Executive Councillors have pointed to their legal obligation to give weight to the likely outcome of any consultation and instead take the view that they are elected to take difficult decisions such as the one under consideration;
- Following discussion on the operation of collections, it has been established that further engagement will take place with town and parish councils. This has provided Members with some reassurance over public impact in the first instance and subsequently for the evolution of the scheme through an iterative process;
- It is understood a petition is being prepared to be submitted to the Council.

2.3 A further theme examined during the meeting concerned the environmental impact of the proposal. Members have been informed that the decision has predominantly been proposed for financial reasons. Information on environmental matters has been obtained, but a full analysis would be highly complex and the particular impact in Huntingdonshire would not be known until the scheme has commenced operation. 70% of waste management authorities in the Eastern Region have already introduced similar schemes so comparison data should be readily available. It has, therefore, been suggested that the environmental impact of the scheme is monitored and formally reported on.

2.4 A final point for consideration is the suggestion that the Council should assess the impact of the proposal on those residents whose income only just exceeds the level that means they should be classed as vulnerable.

3.0 Conclusion and Recommendations:

3.1 The Joint Panel has received a considerable amount of detailed information to assist the call-in process. The Panel has provided robust challenge and a proposal that the Cabinet should be recommended not to proceed with the scheme, which was voted on, did not succeed. The following is a summary of the main points arising from the deliberations:

- The change to Appendix 5 should be identified and an explanation for it provided;
- The Council should monitor and formally report on the environmental impact of the scheme;
- The Council should consult on the principle of charging and on alternative ways of organising the service and also seek suggestions that might help to improve the Council's financial position;
- The sensitivity analysis should be revised to include lower rates of uptake (suggested 15%) up to 2028.

3.2 The Cabinet is

RECOMMENDED

to consider the points summarised above and determine the Recommendations contained in the report by the General Manger for Operations attached as an Appendix hereto.

Appendix – Report presented to Joint Overview and Scrutiny Panel on the Household Garden Waste Subscription Service: 10th August 2023

CONTACT OFFICER

Name/Job Title: A Roberts, Democratic Services Team Leader
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Public
Key Decision - Yes

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: Call-in: Garden Waste Subscription Service

Meeting/Date: Joint Overview and Scrutiny Panel – 10th August 2023

Executive Portfolio: Councillor M Hassall - Executive Councillor for Corporate and Shared Services

Report by: Andrew Rogan, General Manager for Operations

Wards affected: All

Executive Summary:

In accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules and following publication of the Cabinet's decision relating to the Garden Waste Subscription Service, the decision has been called-in by ten Members of the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Panel. The grounds for call-in are set out in paragraph 2.4 of the report.

Recommendation(s):

The Panel is invited to review the additional information provided to consider the call-in of the decision of the Cabinet relating to the Garden Waste Subscription Service and consider whether to endorse the original decision of Cabinet or not to do so in line with the Appendix B Flowchart from the Council's Constitution.

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to enable the Panel to give further consideration to the Cabinet's decision on the Garden Waste Subscription Service which has been called-in.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Cabinet, at its meeting on 18th July 2023, considered a report outlining a proposal for the introduction of a Garden Waste Subscription Service from 1st April 2024. A copy of the report is attached as **Appendix 1**.
- 2.2 The Joint Overview and Scrutiny Panel received a report at their meeting on 6th July 2023 on the proposals and the Panel's comments were conveyed to the Cabinet by way of the report attached as **Appendix 2**.
- 2.3 The Cabinet approved the following –
- a) noted the risks associated with the proposal, both financially and reputationally, that have been highlighted within the report that may arise through emerging national waste policies and guidance, and changes to Cambridgeshire County Council's Waste Private Finance Initiative (PFI) Contract which require approval from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA);
 - b) agreed to the introduction of a household garden waste subscription service from 1st April 2024, as set out within the service terms and conditions;
 - c) agreed to changes to the Waste Collection Policies, relating to the introduction of the chargeable subscription household garden waste service;
 - d) agreed that for 2024/25 the annual collection charge be set at £57.50 per first bin and authorised the Executive Councillor for Corporate and Shared Services in consultation with the Managing Director to review and confirm the currently proposed £30 for each additional bin to the maximum of 4 bins;
 - e) agreed to use the revenue generated by the chargeable subscription household garden waste service to fund the start-up project costs including service redesign, temporary staff resource, website redesign and implementation of associated IT systems (as set out in the financial model Table 3);
 - f) agreed that the existing non-chargeable household garden waste collection service will cease from 31 March 2024. Arrangements will be made during Q2 FY 2024/25 to collect any bins from households that do not wish to subscribe and wish to return them;

- g) agreed to implement a robust communications campaign and incentivisation scheme to encourage subscription sign-ups and promote behaviour change for our residents in waste minimisation; and
- h) agreed to complete a review of the impact of the introduction of a household waste subscription service on lower income residents.

The draft Minute is attached as **Appendix 3**.

2.4 Following publication of the Cabinet's decision, Councillors Alban, Bywater, Cawley, Corney, Criswell, Gardener, Jennings, Lowe, Martin and Welton called-in the decision on the following grounds –

- Lack of consultation with Huntingdonshire residents and Town/Parish Councils and stakeholders;
- Lack of evidence available to Overview and Scrutiny Panel Members regarding full data, assumptions and calculations supporting the financial and environmental claims;
- Request for full underlying data and methodology used for financial and climate assumptions in report;
- Lack of electoral mandate to introduce a charge;
- No clear financial plan over the impacts this will have on vulnerable residents in the District;
- Impacts on the grey bin waste; and
- Impacts on additional use of recycling centres.

2.5 The Panel is, therefore, invited to consider the decision of the Cabinet. The appropriate Executive Councillor, Councillor M Hassall, has been invited to attend the Panel's meeting.

3. GROUNDS FOR CALL-IN

3.1 Lack of consultation with Huntingdonshire residents and Town/Parish Councils and stakeholders

The garden waste collection service is a non-statutory service and the decision made is an extension of the existing service provided for a second bin. The potential for the change was aired in the MTFs and the various considerations given to the introduction of a charge have been through a pre scrutiny and decision-making cycle in accordance with the Constitution.

3.2 A schedule of activities to inform and socialise the proposal for a garden waste subscription service with local Councillors and residents prior to a report presented to Cabinet on 18th July is set out below:

- 22nd February 2023 – Full Council budget approval for MTFs
- 20th June 2023 - All Member briefing
- 6th July 2023 – Overview and Scrutiny panel (Environment, Communities and Partnerships) and Overview and Scrutiny (Performance and Growth) joint exceptional meeting

3.3 Additional engagement opportunities for local Councillors and communities to express their views on how a garden waste subscription

service can be successfully implemented will be delivered through a series of communication channels throughout September and October, the outputs of which will allow current and newly proposed initiatives to be considered for implementation phase and beyond. A commitment exists to seek and listen to feedback and input from local communities on how the scheme can be most effectively operated, whilst supporting all residents the district.

- 3.4 Legal advice has been consistent that no duty exists on Huntingdonshire District Council to formally consult on the proposal to implement a garden waste subscription service, given the Council's room for manoeuvre due to budgetary restrictions would make any consultation without value for residents, and given it is a non-statutory service that already operates as a service for second green bins. Consistent efforts have been made to inform residents of the intent to implement the service.
- 3.5 The impact of introducing a garden waste subscription charge for Huntingdonshire has been significantly mitigated by the learning and data derived from other Local Authorities that offer a chargeable service. Of the 107 Local Authorities in the East and Southeast of England region, 90 already deliver a chargeable garden waste subscription service (84%), 2 are currently progressing with a proposal to charge for garden waste collections (Colchester and Basildon) and 15 Local Authorities (14%) do not charge.
- 3.6 In addition, Huntingdonshire residents currently transact with a chargeable garden waste service with minimal impact, albeit for additional bins beyond the first household bin. Well established processes are in place across HDC services to notify residents for annual renewals, take payments through a variety of payment options, issue packs and stickers, schedule rounds, vehicles and crews, report a missed bin, request additional or replacement bins and respond to customer enquiries through Frequently Asked Questions. The current process has been in operation for 17 years and inter-department working across operations, finance and customer services is robust and mature.
- 3.7 **Lack of evidence available to Overview and Scrutiny Panel Members regarding full data, assumptions and calculations supporting the financial and environmental claims**
Details of the high-level options considered through garden waste collections services were included as an appendix for Cabinet report 18th July and **included again at the end of the report for reference**. As detailed in the analysis the options to suspend the service over the winter months (option #4) or reduce the service via less frequent collections (option #5) would not achieve the savings required to meet the financial requirements of the MTFs.
- 3.8 **Request for full underlying data and methodology used for financial and climate assumptions in report**
Details of the data used to support the environmental and climate impacts is attached as **Appendix 4**
Details of the calculations and financial assumptions used to support the financial modelling is attached as **Appendix 5**

- 3.9 Initial calculations on the impact to pause progress for 12 months as discussed in the Overview and Scrutiny panel meeting on 6th July is included in **Appendix 5**.
- 3.10 **Lack of electoral mandate to introduce a charge**
Elected Local Government Councillors operate within the context of a representative democracy. Within this context it is the role of Councillors to not simply communicate the wishes of the electorate but also to use their own judgment in the exercise of their powers. This is essential as many of the challenges that Councillors face may be un-precedented, or unforeseeable. Elected members having been duly elected, once they form an administration are vested with the power to make decisions within the confines of the Council's constitution and governance framework and are able to implement policy accordingly. Their election within this system provides a mandate for decision making that they consider appropriate.
- 3.11 **No clear financial plan over the impacts this will have on vulnerable residents in the District**
As requested by Councillors at the Overview and Scrutiny Panel meeting on 6th July 2023, the Equality Impact Assessment for the garden waste subscription service as included as an appendix report for Cabinet and attached as **Appendix 6**
- 3.12 The Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) aims to:
- Assess the potential impact of the service on different equality groups.
 - Identify any potential barriers or disadvantages faced by specific groups.
 - Ensure that the service is designed and delivered in a manner that promotes equality, inclusivity and accessibility for all residents.
- 3.13 The conclusion of the Equality Impact Assessment recommends a number of measures that can be implemented to minimise the financial impact of a garden waste subscription service on lower income residents through:
- the Council will support residents through the Council Tax Support Scheme, that calculates the contribution required based on the benefits they are in receipt of. A review of this scheme in 2023 will ensure the most financial vulnerable residents are offered the greatest level of Council Tax Support award.
 - Residents who need additional information, advice and guidance can contact the Residents Advice and Information team, who assess a person's personal circumstances and work with them to suggest suitable and sustainable changes and routes to small funding pots that can help to achieve their goals eg: to reduce their household expenditure and/or apply for funding if the retention of a garden waste collection service is important in their household to maintain positive physical and mental health.
 - households can share bins under their own informal arrangements but only one household will be responsible for the subscription and adherence to the T&Cs of the scheme.

- 3.14 Further benchmarking and financial impacts of offering a discounted payment scheme for households in receipt of benefits has been investigated. Of the 90 Local Authorities in the East and Southeast of England region that deliver a chargeable garden waste subscription service, 13 offer a discount payment scheme (as promoted through their Council's website). Having investigated the discount schemes offered to residents, none of the Local Authorities are able to validate a request for discounts or review the payments after a discount has been awarded, due to the significant administration overhead to do these tasks. On the basis of these findings the recommendation approved by the Project Board was to use alternative financial support offers (as detailed in the EIA) to support lower income residents, rather than offer a specific discount through the implementation of the garden waste subscription service. The detailed report is attached as **Appendix 7**
- 3.15 A series of engagement opportunities for local Councillors and communities to express their views on how a garden waste subscription service can be successfully implemented and support residents on lower incomes will include the benefits and feasibility of a range of community initiatives, including but not limited to:
- Saturday freighter collections at appropriate community locations
 - Subsidised home composters
 - Utilising the existing community composting champions' network
 - Free loose compost
 - Local land management green bin incentives (suggestion from discussion at Overview and Scrutiny Panel, 6th July)
 - Local business sponsorships for free bins
 - Free bin allocations to Town and Parish councils – for discretionary distribution
- 3.16 The recommendation of the Overview and Scrutiny joint panel on 6th July was to investigate further financial modelling of the additional bin costs as a way to support residents on lower incomes. Once completed this will inform the community initiatives set out above:
“to agree that for 2024/25 the annual collection charge be set at £57.50 per first bin and authorise the Executive Councillor for Corporate and Shared Services in consultation with the Managing Director to review and confirm the currently proposed £30 for each additional bin to the maximum of 4 bins;” any additional revenue generated from an increase in second bin charge above this minimum amount will be ringfenced to support initiatives for residents on lower incomes.
- 3.17 **Impacts on the grey bin waste**
Details of the data used to support the impacts on the current waste collection streams (grey bin waste and use of recycling centres) is attached as **Appendix 4**
- 3.18 **Impacts on additional use of recycling centres.**
Details of the data used to support the impacts on the current waste collection streams (grey bin waste and use of recycling centres) is attached as **Appendix 4**

4. CALL-IN

- 4.1 Members are reminded of the guidance for call-in as set out in paragraph 15.1 and Appendix B of the Overview and Scrutiny Rules of the Council's Constitution; attached in this report under **BACKGROUND PAPERS Council Constitution**
- 4.2 The Panel has two options, which are as follows –
- if, having considered the matter, the Panel is still concerned about the decision, then it may be referred back to the Cabinet for reconsideration, setting out in writing the nature of the concerns. If referred back to Cabinet, they would then be required to reconsider their decision within 10 working days, amending the decision or not, before adopting a final decision; or
 - if the Panel decides not to refer the matter back to the Cabinet, the decision shall take effect from the date of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel meeting.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

- 5.1 This report has been produced in accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Rules of the Council's Constitution.
- 5.2 Considered legal opinion is that there was no duty upon the Council to consult in relation to this matter.
- 5.3 The considered opinion of the Councils Section 151 and Monitoring officers is that the process undertaken to date is in accordance with Council's Budget & Policy Framework Procedure Rules. within the Constitution.

6. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no direct financial implications arising out of this call-in. However, any delay to implementing the decisions made by the Cabinet or changes to those decisions will have financial implications.

7. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

- 7.1 The Panel is invited to consider the call-in of the decision of the Cabinet relating to the Garden Waste Subscription Service'

8. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

Appendix 1 – Report presented to Cabinet on the Household Garden Waste Subscription Service: 18th July 2023

Appendix 2 – Comments of the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Panel: 6th July 2023

Appendix 3 – Draft Minute of Cabinet: 18th July 2023

Appendix 4 - Data used to support the environmental and climate impacts and the impacts on the current waste collection streams

Appendix 5 - Calculations and financial assumptions used to support the financial modelling

Appendix 6 – Equality Impact Assessment for garden waste subscription service: July 2023

Appendix 7 – Benefits discount proposal and recommendations paper: July 2023

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Council Constitution – Appendix B – pre-decision scrutiny and Call-in processes

CONTACT OFFICER

Name/Job Title: Andrew Rogan, General Manager Operations

Email: andrew.rogan@huntingdonshire.gov.uk

Garden waste collection options considered (*updated*)

Option	Proposed change description	Savings	Impact on staffing	Transition costs (one off charges to move to new system)	Waste and Resource strategy (WRS) alignment	Impact on recycling rates and collection tonnages	RECAP partnership alignment	PFI contract and other potential impacts
1. Do Nothing	Continue with fortnightly free co-mingled garden and food waste collections, to 80k households with an option to pay for additional bins (up to 5 in total)	No immediate savings- operational costs approx. £800k annually, with increased costs every 3-4yrs as the district grows (additional housing) requiring additional rounds to meet the demand.	No impact on current staffing levels. Additional staff required every 3-4 yrs with projected district growth (availability of workforce means some will be agency to meet demand)	None required	Some alignment- Although no details available as yet; government has suggested free garden waste collections, although it had mandated separate food waste collection in the environment bill. No details released on when this will be implemented or funding available for rollout	Neutral- there would be no impact on current collection tonnages or recycling rate Current recycling rate 58%. Additional tonnage every 3-4 years with projected district growth	Partial - Fenland and Peterborough both have fully chargeable garden collection services. Rest are on fortnightly free collection with opt in subscription service for additional bins	No request of contract change required, no DEFRA approval required and no potential cost of this to HDC
Stop collecting garden waste altogether	The service will stop - as a non-statutory service there is no requirement for HDC to offer this service to residents.	Indicative saving figures significant - revenue saving of £800k annually £200k annual capital savings on vehicle replacement costs	Indicative staffing figures significant - 21 staff would be at risk	Indicative saving figures significant £200k staff restructure costs, £250k for recall of green bins from residents, £60k comms, £100k additional temporary staff for customer services to absorb with increased traffic through call centre due to changes.	Significant impacts against national policy Food waste and garden waste collections are an integral part of WRS. Government have intimated they would like LA's to provide free garden waste collections to all properties along with a separate free weekly food waste collection. No further information is yet unavailable from Government on timescales or whether chargeable would still be permitted.	Large negative impact- we would reduce collection tonnages of compostable material to zero from current 23,000 tonnes Recycling rate will sit around 39%-	Does not align Would not align with any of the RECAP partners.	Contract change request would have to be submitted, potential multi-million-pound compensation event for HDC Additional costs for CCC as footfall increase through Household Recycling Centres (HRC) Increased refuse due to food waste being diverted to grey bin from green.

<p>3. Fully chargeable collections</p>	<p>Charge for garden waste collections only Fenland charge £45 pa and Peterborough charge £50 for first bin and £75 for two bins. HDC could charge average of £47.50 In UK approx. 65% LA's charge for garden collections and is estimated to provide £74m in additional income pa</p>	<p>Indicative figures to be modelled to be cost neutral Depending on participation rate, you could look at generating after deducting operating costs of Approx £450,000 Income 30%- £700k pa 40%-£1.1m pa 50%£1.4m pa This service would only cover garden waste and food waste would need to be diverted into the grey bin</p>	<p>Indicative figures further to full financial modelling Redeploying staff by 11 crew members. Potential further staff reductions depending on how the routes evolve, driver+1 instead of driver +2 currently</p>	<p>Indicative figures further to full financial modelling: £100k restructuring costs. £250k bin removals and redeliveries etc. £100k comms £70k call centre staff to handle volume of queries due to changes</p>	<p>Alignment Food waste and garden waste collections are an integral part of WRS Government have intimated they would like LA's to provide free garden waste collections to all properties along with a separate free weekly food waste collection. No further information is yet unavailable from Government on timescales or whether chargeable would still be permitted.</p>	<p>Potential negative impact on recycling rates but hugely dependant on participation rates. Using Fenland and Peterborough's current recycling rates as a benchmark we could be looking anywhere between 40%-50% recycling rate</p>	<p>Partial - Fenland and Peterborough both have fully chargeable garden collection services.</p>	<p>PFI contract change request would need approval from Thalia, DEFRA and CCC. Additional costs may be incurred by HDC for the changes. Unknown until form submitted and reviewed. Residents may disengage from recycling altogether, which could increase contamination and further reductions in recycling rates.</p>
<p>Suspend Garden waste collections during winter</p>	<p>Suspend garden waste collections between 1st Dec-1st March (3 full months of lowest collection tonnages)</p>	<p>Indicative figures of fuel saving of approx. -£34k Agency staff savings £12k as garden crews are redeployed into other areas.</p>	<p>No impact on staff numbers as they would be redeployed into other areas.</p>	<p>Indicative figures of comms £15k annually this would include bin hangers and stickers £20k call centre staff to handle volume of queries due to changes</p>	<p>There is no clear details as yet from Government regarding WRS and collection consistency and garden collections.</p>	<p>Low impact on recycling figures 2,700 tonnes were collected during the same period in 2021 Recycling rates is estimated to reduce to around 54%</p>	<p>Partial - S/Cambs reduce their garden collections to monthly during the winter period.</p>	<p>PFI contract change form would need to be submitted and agreed by Thalia, DEFRA and CCC. Food waste would be diverted into the grey bin, it may be difficult to get residents to revert back during the summer months. We could be challenged for refunds from residents using our garden waste</p>

								subscription service as they will be losing 3 months of paid service from HDC. Current subscription service costs £55 for additional garden bin income is around £200k pa
5. Three-weekly garden collections	Reduce collection frequency from current fortnightly to 3 weekly	Indicative figures of savings £150k staff reduction of 6 £42k fuel, servicing, tyres etc. Capital saving of £400k on vehicle replacement as would require 2 less rounds	Indicative figures of staffing would be reduced by 2 drivers and 4 loaders	Indicative figures of comms £40k restructure of staff £60k comms. £30k call centre staff. Rerouting software, round data etc. £40k £40k call centre staff to handle volume of queries due to changes	WRS seeks to gain consistency in collections across the country, currently no details are available on what that looks like as government have yet to release details it could mean however, that we are mandated to provide free fortnightly collections for garden waste.	Low impact on recycling rates as numbers of household serviced annually is decreased. Estimated recycling rate to be around 52%	Does not align Would not align with any of the RECAP partners	PFI contract request form would need to be submitted and approved by Thalia, DEFRA and CCC before changes commence, could have financial implications for HDC to make contract changes. Increased costs for CCC as footfall increases at HRC's and potential increase in fly tipping Subscription garden service fees would be challenged as frequency of collections reduced for a chargeable service

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Public
Key Decision - Yes

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: Household Garden Waste Subscription Service

Meeting/Date: Joint Overview & Scrutiny Panel – 6th July 2023
Cabinet – 18th July 2023

Executive Portfolio: Cllr Martin Hassall – Executive Councillor for Corporate and Shared Services

Report by: Andrew Rogan, General Manager for Operations

Ward(s) affected: All

Executive Summary:

Like many councils across the country, we are facing financial challenges. Over the next four years we need to find ways to save money or generate income to combat rising costs, inflation and cuts in government grants. These challenges create a threat to the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) against a non-chargeable garden waste service. In jeopardy is £14.3m, resulting in a worse case MTFS scenario of £9.7m deficit.

At Council in February 2023, budget savings and income generating schemes were approved, including proposals for a chargeable subscription household garden waste service. Delivery of this work was included as part of the overall MTFS saving and income proposals and is in line with the Budget Principles agreed by Council in December 2022.

Around 65% of authorities across England and half of the waste collection authorities in the Eastern Region have already opted to charge for household garden waste collections. Rather than ceasing our non-statutory free service, this proposal retains the service for subscribers and brings Huntingdonshire in line with Fenland District Council within Cambridgeshire and the majority of waste collection authorities nationally and regionally.

Not all properties in Huntingdonshire require the service and the current garden waste collection service costs the Council at least £800,000 per annum, in the directly attributable variable service costs alone. As the District's population grows, these costs will rise to meet demand, so introducing a chargeable, subscription-based service will ensure that the service remains sustainable.

This report proposes the introduction of a household garden waste subscription service, which would replace the current non-chargeable collection service from April 2024. It sets out the potential risks associated with the proposal (both nationally and locally) and the likely costs that could be incurred by

Cambridgeshire County Council as a result of this change, particularly when considered across the waste system approach. This proposal aims to ensure that the garden waste service in Huntingdonshire is self-funding and sustainable in line with the Council's carbon reduction targets of net zero by 2040.

Recommendations:

The Cabinet is:

RECOMMENDED

- a) to note the risks associated with the proposal, both financially and reputationally, that have been highlighted within the report that may arise through emerging national waste policies and guidance, and changes to Cambridgeshire County Council's Waste Private Finance Initiative (PFI) Contract which require approval from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)
- b) to agree to the introduction of a household garden waste subscription service from 1st April 2024, as set out within the service terms and conditions attached as Appendix 2 of this report;
- c) to agree to changes to the Waste Collection Policies, relating to the introduction of the chargeable subscription household garden waste service as set out in Appendix 2 of this report;
- d) to agree that for 2024/25 the annual collection charge be set at £57.50 per first bin and authorise the Executive Councillor for Corporate and Shared Services in consultation with the Managing Director to review and confirm the currently proposed £30 for each additional bin to the maximum of 4 bins;
- e) to agree to use the revenue generated by the chargeable subscription household garden waste service to fund the start-up project costs including service redesign, temporary staff resource, website redesign and implementation of associated IT systems (as set out in the financial model Table 3);
- f) to agree that the existing non-chargeable household garden waste collection service will cease from 31 March 2024. Arrangements will be made during Q2 FY 2024/25 to collect any bins from households that do not wish to subscribe and wish to return them; and
- g) to agree to implement a robust communications campaign and incentivisation scheme to encourage subscription sign-ups and promote behaviour change for our residents in waste minimisation.

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 This report seeks approval from Cabinet to replace the current non-chargeable household garden waste collection service and provide a Garden Waste Subscription Service that protects garden waste services for those residents who wish to use it, whilst noting the potential risks associated with it set out in Section 8 below. The proposed service would start from April 2024.
- 1.2 Currently the cost of garden waste collection is distributed among all taxpayers, through funding diverted from other services, regardless of their usage or benefit.
- 1.3 By directly charging for this service, we establish a system where those who actively utilise the service contribute to its funding.
- 1.4 Completely removing the service would result in residents having to travel to local recycling centres at greater financial and environmental cost, which some residents may prefer to do rather than subscribing to the Garden Waste Subscription Service.
- 1.5 The proposal for charging a subscription for the service is driven by the financial requirement to maintain a balanced budget and to set a sustainable Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).
- 1.6 Huntingdonshire District Council already operates a chargeable garden waste subscription collection service that facilitates households paying for up to three additional garden waste bins.

2. CURRENT FINANCIAL POSITION AND ANALYSIS

- 2.1 Huntingdonshire District Council collects Council Tax from residents within the District on behalf of Cambridgeshire County Council, the Police and Crime Commissioner for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, Cambridgeshire Fire Authority, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority as well as Town and Parish councils across the District.
- 2.2 The District Council keep just 7p of every £1 of Council Tax collected as the other elements are determined by the other organisations. The Council Tax we retain is significantly lower than the majority of our neighbours, and the national average for Shire Districts.
- 2.3 In 2023/24 Huntingdonshire District Council had the 17th lowest Council Tax of all Shire Districts.

Table 1 – Comparison of Band D Council Tax across neighbouring authorities

	Band D, 2023/24
Fenland District Council	£ 255.24
North Herts District Council	£ 252.46
Cambridge City	£ 218.85
South Cambs District Council	£ 165.31
Huntingdonshire District Council	£ 155.86
East Cambs District Council	£ 142.14
National average for Shire Districts	£ 204.00

2.4 The following table outlines how the Council's proportion of its total Council Tax has decreased over the past few years.

Table 2 – Comparison of Band D Council Tax over 10 years

Year	Band D CT	HDC CT	HDC share %
2014-15	£1,557.92	£133.18	8.50%
2015-16	£1,584.76	£133.18	8.40%
2016-17	£1,609.29	£133.18	8.30%
2017-18	£1,641.12	£135.84	8.30%
2018-19	£1,675.14	£138.56	8.30%
2019-20	£1,753.39	£142.16	8.10%
2020-21	£1,855.39	£145.86	7.90%
2021-22	£1,925.18	£145.86	7.60%
2022-23	£1,985.81	£150.86	7.60%
2023-24	£2,075.41	£155.86	7.50%

2.5 Huntingdonshire District Council approved its budget in February 2023:
“We will protect front-line services to our most vulnerable people to avoid individuals or families falling into crisis through our continued approaches built on prevention and early intervention.

We will balance the need for fees, charges and commercial revenues with the demands on our services, our community’s ability to pay and the uncertainty over central government funding.”

2.6 The Council is required to set a balanced budget and a Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

2.7 The MTFS for 2022/23 identified a budget deficit of £8.1m. In the 2023/24 MTFS, the deficit for 2023/24 was addressed through a combination of efficiency savings and the single year Local Government Finance Settlement. However, this still left deficits in some of the remaining years which the Council needed to balance, combined with a lack of certainty around (NNDR) re-baselining. To do this, the Council needs to find ways to save money or generate income in a landscape of rising costs and inflation, combined with cuts in government grants, which is also being experienced by other Councils. In a worst-case scenario, the Council

would have a budget deficit of £9.7m across the remaining four years of the MTFS.

- 2.8 The Joint Administration has already identified the need for a sustainable plan that seeks opportunities to transform our services to live within a balanced budget, be greener and use technology better. Considerable analysis, including a service-by-service review of all Council spend concluded that charging for garden waste collection is the only practical proposition that both closes the gap and protects our much-valued non-statutory services.
- 2.9 Waste and recycling are the single most significant expenditure for the Council. It costs the Council at least £800,000 per year in directly attributable variable costs to provide the garden waste collection service to all Huntingdonshire properties. With reductions in Government funding creating ever-increasing pressure to find further savings, considerations such as charging for non-statutory services previously offered for free have become necessary.
- 2.10 In the last 18 years, the garden waste collection service, which is a non-statutory service, has been fully funded and supported by the Council.
- 2.11 In the coming year, the Council will see increased costs as we introduce additional collection rounds with associated costs to meet the ever-growing demand associated with housing growth.
- 2.12 The planning trajectory has forecast an additional 12,000 properties will be built in Huntingdonshire by 2025. As well as increasing statutory operational costs across the District, it will mean increased unfunded Garden Waste collection costs if a subscription scheme is not implemented.
- 2.13 Moving to a garden waste subscription service will impact on the contractual clauses and incentives that Cambridgeshire County Council as the waste disposal authority has with the Government and with their waste disposal contractor. As such the Council has been in discussion with Cambridgeshire County Council since 2022, noting that Fenland District Council historically moved to a subscription garden collection authority with no financial penalty.
- 2.14 The County has confirmed that the increase in waste disposal costs on the basis of the changes that the Council are proposing to make is forecast to be between £138k and £276k per annum. The loss of waste infrastructure grant payments for Cambridgeshire County Council is forecast to be £60,320 for the predicted reduction in recycling levels. Providing a combined view by Cambridgeshire County Council: **“our estimate of the impacts would be additional costs between £198K and £336K a year”**. The County Council are committed to working with the Council to deliver agreed figures, once the decision has been taken to move to charged waste, noting that the final decision will ultimately be subject to DEFRA agreeing to the change being made to the Waste PFI Contract and the County Council’s contractor agreeing to the change having no impact on its cost. Furthermore, agreement to what proportion of the figure above the Council will be asked to pay also needs to be confirmed, noting that Fenland District Council made the change without any contractual penalty.

2.15 Currently the cost of garden waste collection is distributed among all taxpayers, through funding diverted from other services, regardless of their usage or benefit.

3. OPTIONS CONSIDERED/ANALYSIS WHAT OTHER AUTHORITIES ARE DOING

3.1 65% of English Waste Collection Authorities have introduced a charge for collecting garden waste. In the Eastern Region, 50% have already taken up the statutory option to charge for Household Garden Waste, with Fenland District Council being the only charged for service in Cambridgeshire. The provision of this type of charged service is therefore tried and tested. The Council has looked to those authorities already operating such services to inform the proposed service for Huntingdonshire.

3.2 New DEFRA guidelines on waste collections are expected imminently. No advance details have been published about expectations of collection methodology. However, it is likely that Councils that do not currently charge a subscription for garden waste collection will be unable to do so in the future once the new DEFRA guidance has been issued.

3.3 Colchester City Council, Braintree District Council and North Northamptonshire Council are introducing new subscription services this year.

3.4 In East Anglia, the average price charged is £59.33 per garden waste bin

3.5 The Council are proposing a rate of £57.50 per annum for the first bin. This is the equivalent of £1.10 per week for a single bin.

4. RATIONALE AND PROJECTED REVENUE

4.1 The current free non-statutory service costs the Council at least £800k annually in directly attributable variable costs. Table 3 shows the potential income levels for a chargeable garden waste service. This is based on research from other authorities who have implemented a similar system and have delivered average subscription rates of around 40% across their districts. These figures are an illustration of the potential income but are not guaranteed.

4.2 Based on high-level financial modelling and data taken from authorities who have delivered similar schemes, a self-funded service is forecast from 2024/25 onwards.

4.3 Costs in the first year will be higher as a result of set-up costs, including service redesign, temporary staff resources, website redesign, legal costs, back-office systems etc. and resources required to recover and recycle any returned unused wheeled bins. These are shown in Table 3.

Table 3 - Financial projection of the chargeable garden service, including potential contribution to County.

Year	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
Change Implementation					
Billing system changes		100,000			
Removal and redelivery of green bins		250,000			
Amendments to rota		0			
Staff consultation - support services		22,500			
Restructure costs		126,564			
Call centre resource		63,037			
Change management costs - PM etc		162,500			
Communication to residents		125,000			
Total Change Implementation costs	0	849,601	0	0	0
Ongoing Revenue Account Impacts					
Income:					
<i>1st Green bin, % expected take up</i>	<i>0%</i>	<i>30%</i>	<i>40%</i>	<i>50%</i>	<i>50%</i>
<i>1st Green bin, chargeable volume collected</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>24,000</i>	<i>32,000</i>	<i>40,000</i>	<i>40,000</i>
1st Green bin, income generated	0	(1,380,000)	(1,840,000)	(2,300,000)	(2,300,000)
<i>2nd Green bin, % expected take up</i>	<i>6%</i>	<i>4%</i>	<i>4%</i>	<i>4%</i>	<i>4%</i>
<i>2nd Green bin, chargeable volume collected</i>	<i>4,800</i>	<i>2,880</i>	<i>2,880</i>	<i>2,880</i>	<i>2,880</i>
2nd Green bin, income generated	(172,040)	(86,400)	(86,400)	(86,400)	(86,400)
Remove 2nd green bin revenue - prev MTFS	172,040	205,000	205,000	205,000	205,000
Total additional Income Generation	0	(1,261,400)	(1,721,400)	(2,181,400)	(2,181,400)
Expenditure impacts:					
Staff cost savings	0	(318,580)	(238,935)	(159,290)	(159,290)
Fuel cost savings	0	(81,089)	(60,816)	(40,544)	(40,544)
Call centre staff	0	35,000	35,000	35,000	35,000
Annual billing	0	20,000	30,000	40,000	40,000
Transaction fees, card payment	0	27,600	36,800	46,000	46,000
Administration - staff	0	31,519	31,519	31,519	31,519
Annual renewals	0	28,320	37,760	47,200	47,200
Recycling incentives for residents	0	200,000	200,000	200,000	200,000
Potential contribution for losses to CCC	0	198,000	264,000	330,000	330,000
Total additional Expenditure	0	140,770	335,328	529,885	529,885
Net (Surplus)/deficit - Operational Impact	0	(1,120,630)	(1,386,072)	(1,651,515)	(1,651,515)
Costs of implementation	0	849,601	0	0	0
Net (Surplus)/deficit - MTFS	0	(271,029)	(1,386,072)	(1,651,515)	(1,651,515)

4.4 A one-off cost for restructuring is included as a contingency to ensure all possible costs are captured in the financial model. It is planned to redeploy staff currently working on garden waste collections to work on other waste streams and reduce our dependency on agency staff, should we need to.

- 4.5 As the service will be funded directly by those subscribing, it is proposed that the charge per bin is reviewed each year as part of our standard fees and charges review process.
- 4.6 As this is a new service, the take up in the first year is an estimated value. There is a risk that the service will not meet its financial objectives if take-up is lower than anticipated in year one, as that year also incurs set-up costs. To reduce this risk, a number of incentive schemes will be considered if the proposal to charge for garden waste collection is approved. (see Section 8 Key impacts and Risks)
- 4.7 A robust web payment, in-cab and back-office systems will be in place, along with additional Customer Services staff at busy times of the year.

5. SERVICE DESIGN

- 5.1 The Council already has a garden waste subscription service. Under the new scheme, the subscriptions are expected to rise from circa 4k households to forecast numbers of 20k+ households once the scheme is operational. To scale the service, the Council will implement automated processes.
- 5.2 In drawing up this proposal, the Council has included elements of best practice from other local authorities who have introduced similar schemes.
- 5.3 The design principles of the new service are to encourage the maximum number of subscriptions in the first year of operations through payment and services that meet customers' expectations e.g.: payments through a range of methods, available 24/7, secure and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) compliant.
- 5.4 The details of the proposed garden waste service are set out in Appendices 2-3 of this report, and the key features are summarised as follows:
- 5.4.1 The Service is proposed to commence from 1st April 2024 (the existing garden waste collection service would cease on 31st March 2024).
- 5.4.2 Residents will be invited to subscribe to the new service from Q4 FY 23/24. This will allow time for payments to be made and routes, schedules and crews to be planned for the years' collections.
- 5.4.3 To subscribe residents will be required to make an initial annual payment by card with an option to also set up a direct debit subscription, set to take payment from 1st April each year.
- 5.4.4 Existing Direct Debit subscribers (households who currently subscribe for additional garden waste collections) will be notified of the change to the service in Q4 FY23/24 and invited to subscribe to the new service.
- 5.4.5 The preferred payment option will be an annual direct debit payment, which will ensure a more convenient and smoother customer experience, along with creating a level of financial sustainability for

the delivery of the service. Residents will also have the option to pay online annually via credit or debit card.

- 5.4.6 Subscribed service garden waste bins will be clearly identified as paid for via a subscription sticker. The sticker will last for the year and display the property's address. Additionally, the Council's in-cab and back-office systems will record the valid subscriptions.
- 5.4.7 Properties will be able to subscribe for up to four, wheeled garden waste bins, providing an annual subscription fee is received for the primary bin and each additional bin. There also needs to be a suitable location for collection.
- 5.4.8 Customers who do not subscribe may wish to return their garden bin. It is proposed that the re-collection of bins is not introduced until six months after the implementation date. This would allow residents who did not subscribe initially, time to consider taking up the service. Other local authorities who have implemented garden waste subscription services record on average 50% subscriptions prior to launch date and 50% subscription up to 6 months after launch.
- 5.4.9 Any unwanted bins, or bins left out and not showing a paid subscription sticker, will be collected and either recycled or prepared for re-use.
- 5.4.10 Customers who join the service mid-year will pay the full annual price. This is in line with our current additional bin charging. This is due to the cost of administration.
- 5.4.11 Options to automate the process and offer in-year payments in the future will be considered once the service has matured and robust data with which to inform the benefit this could deliver, can be assessed.
- 5.4.12 Customers will be welcome to share bins under their own informal arrangements but only one household will be responsible for the subscription and adherence to the Terms and Conditions (T&Cs) of the scheme (Appendix 2).
- 5.4.13 The chargeable garden waste service will run independently from refuse and recycling services.
- 5.4.14 To support customers in adjusting to the new service and meet increased expectations that might accompany a chargeable service, we will provide new website content, including Frequently Asked Questions. Additional call centre staff have been included in the financial modelling for 3-6 months of year 1 of operation.
- 5.4.15 We will develop a set of management indicators to determine the performance of this new service, including operational, financial and customer satisfaction metrics.
- 5.4.16 From the experience of other local authorities, there is the potential for some of the garden and other compostable waste currently collected in garden bins to move to other waste streams, such as grey bins. Organic waste can then potentially be reclaimed by Mechanical

Biological Treatment - a composting process which reduces the weight of the grey bin material and produces a material with a reduced biological content.

- 5.4.17 Garden waste collected through the new subscription service would continue to be composted under the current County Council's Waste Disposal arrangements. We are working with the County Council to understand how our proposed changes will impact on their contractual arrangements with no additional charges to HDC. The precedent for this has already been set by Fenland District Council who introduced garden waste charging in FY 2017/18.
- 5.4.18 Food waste will not be permitted in the new subscription garden waste bins, as per the Controlled Waste Regulations 2012, which mandates that food waste is collected free of charge. A charge can be levied for garden waste collections but does not include food waste.
- 5.4.19 For those not wishing to pay for a garden waste subscription service, their green waste should be taken to the nearest Household Recycling Centre (HRC). However, there is a likelihood that this could be displaced into the grey bin which has implications for the County's Waste PFI Contract. This would also be the case for any food waste placed into the grey bin.
- 5.4.20 It is anticipated that under the current Government's Waste and Resources Strategy, and as set out in the Environmental Protection Act 2021, it will be the duty of all waste collection authorities to provide a separate weekly food waste collection from all domestic and commercial properties in the near future.

6. OTHER BENEFITS

- 6.1 The Strategic Waste Systems Review of 2020 undertaken by Local Partnerships, suggests that 31% of garden waste will disappear from the waste stream through resident behaviour change.
- 6.2 Evidence from other authorities demonstrates that residents will explore a range of options for their garden waste, with the majority making exclusive use of garden waste wheeled bins and a proportion making use of a combination of the service and other means, such as chipping and composting or driving to the nearest Household Recycling Centre (HRC).
- 6.3 Currently, Government and local policy is predicated on the volume of waste we collect and recycle with the principle being that more (volume and weight) is positive. The financial remuneration follows this. However, in principle, and in line with our environmental policy, we want to produce less total waste but recycle as much of it as possible. Work is also in progress to maximise the recycling generated through the Blue Bin service.
- 6.4 Reducing the volume of organic waste will impact the recycling rate measures. A 7% or more reduction is anticipated as the recycling rate is calculated as a combination of Dry Mixed Recycling (DMR) and organic waste, with organic waste having a significantly higher weight and density than DMR.

- 6.5 Reducing the volume of organic waste could improve the overall carbon footprint of the waste with fewer resources required for collection.
- 6.6 The waste hierarchy starts with Reduce, Reuse and then Recycle. This will be a positive contribution to our climate change ambitions.

7. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

- 7.1 The Panel discussed the Household Garden Waste Subscription Service at its meeting on 6th July 2023.
- 7.2 Councillor Criswell expressed his anger over the report and proposed subscription, giving his reasons as due to;
- the way that the proposal had been received by members of the public;
 - failure to use Overview and Scrutiny to help develop the proposal;
 - introduction of a charge on an existing service;
 - charging residents who are trying to do the right thing by recycling green waste;
 - disproportionately affecting elderly residents who enjoy gardening but may be on a low income;
 - no consultation with residents on the proposed subscription charge;
 - concern that the make up of the joint administration politically is not one that residents had voted for; and
 - that Executive Councillors are not owning the proposed subscription introduction and suggesting that the decision to introduce had been made by Officers.
- 7.3 The Panel were assured that whilst the proposed fee of £57.50 had been modelled by Officers, the proposed subscription had been proposed by the Joint Administration.
- 7.4 Councillor Gardener observed that the report and Executive Councillors had highlighted that the fee was being introduced for those who used the service and enquired if that meant that residents could request refunds for those services which their Council Tax pays for but that they do not use. The Panel heard that the Joint Administration were aware that this would not be a popular decision but that it was necessary to protect the service for those residents who wished to continue to use it. The Panel heard that garden waste collection is a non-statutory collection and that the Council is no longer able to deliver this service free of charge. The proposed changes would also allow local business opportunity and innovation in opening up opportunities for alternative waste collections.
- 7.5 Concern was expressed by Councillor Cawley that the figures within the report were scare tactics and may be working to fund a shortfall that may not happen. He also queried the quoted reduction in CO2 emissions given that many residents may choose to dispose of their garden waste at local recycling centres by private car instead of subscribing to the service.
- 7.6 In response to these questions, the Panel heard that;
- the shortfall figure of £8.3 million was a worst case scenario but that without action there would be a shortfall which would accumulate year on year; and

- that the predicted CO2 emissions reduction was due to a reduction of refuse vehicles on the road, due to reduced collections and also reduced waste to be reprocessed.
- 7.7 Councillors Cawley and Lowe enquired how it was anticipated that residents would create less green waste should they not have a green bin. The Panel were advised that analysis of other Councils who have undergone the same process, showed that those without a garden waste receptacle generated less green waste. It was further advised that residents also had the option to compost, to use their garden waste as mulch or alternatively to dispose of it at their local recycling centre.
- 7.8 Following an observation from Councillor Cawley that home composting of food waste would generate more methane emissions, the Panel heard that current analysis of waste within each of the three bins currently provided by the Council showed that more food waste was disposed of between the grey and blue bins than the green bin, therefore a change in this behaviour was not anticipated.
- 7.9 Councillor Shaw observed that whilst he believed all Councillors were unhappy with the decision to introduce the subscription service, the reality was that it would be a viable way to address the gap in the finances. Furthermore, the Panel heard that the Section 151 Officer would be unable to sign off the accounts without the introduction of the subscription and the continuation of the service.
- 7.10 The lack of public consultation on the proposed subscription service was queried by Councillors Alban and Lowe who observed that an ongoing consultation on Electrical Vehicle Charging had already been met with a good response from the public. The Panel heard that there is no option to continue the service free of charge therefore a consultation would be immaterial and unreasonable, however it was stressed that public consultation would be held following approval of the recommendations to gauge public opinion on other aspects of the proposed changes. Councillor Alban expressed pride over the good recycling rates achieved by residents in the district to date and shared his concerns that the poorest residents would be disproportionately affected which he claimed was at odds with the ethos of the Joint Administration. The Panel heard that by introducing the proposed subscription service on a non-statutory service, the Council would be able to refocus spending on statutory services. The Panel were further appraised that the report had been brought through the democratic cycle of meetings followings concerns expressed at the Council meeting in February 2023.
- 7.11 Following a further enquiry from Councillor Alban regarding the Saturday working detailed within the report, the Panel were advised that this had been budgeted for as overtime and that this work would assist those residents not subscribed to the scheme. The alternative options available under this part of the scheme would form part of the proposed consultation to residents.
- 7.12 It was observed by Councillor Pickering that this was not an easy decision to make and he empathised with those who had had to make the

decision, and enquired whether there was potential to offer assistance for those who are in receipt of Council Tax Support.

7.13 Councillors Harvey and Hunt expressed concerns over the impact of the proposed subscription to poorer residents and enquired around alternative payment options aside from annual payments. The Panel heard that the proposal would be to collect the annual fee during the annual break in Council Tax payment collections but that further work would be undertaken to investigate alternative payment options. Councillor Hunt also observed that he had seen press reports stating that the Council was in a good financial position, however the Panel heard that there were not sufficient reserves to cover the projected deficit without cuts to statutory services if this service were to continue without a subscription charge.

7.14 Councillor Hunt proposed to add an additional recommendation to the Cabinet report, this recommendation was seconded by Councillor Harvey and the Panel voted in favour of forwarding the proposed recommendation to Cabinet.

g) to agree to complete a review of the impact of the introduction of a household waste subscription service on lower income residents.

7.15 Councillor Bywater stated that he could not support the proposal and shared his comments and concerns on the proposals within the report including;

- observation that the budget deficit had been present for the past 12 years therefore was not a new issue;
- residents are struggling financially at this time, therefore unreasonable to put further strain on household budgets;
- proposed subscription service undermines the Council's commitment to protect it's residents and to support them in combating Climate Change;
- affecting residents without transport;
- encouraging fly tipping or burning of garden waste;
- encouraging vermin through food waste in garden compost;
- lack of environmental impact assessment;
- opposition from residents; and
- affecting the ability to form a sustainable and inclusive community across the District.

7.16 Councillor Bywater further stated that he would not support the proposal as there was no financial data to support the cost of this proposal and how this would affect the projected financials within the report, he also queried how Cabinet could make an informed decision on the recommendations without the full data to support them. The Panel were assured that a quality impact assessment had been developed and analysed alongside available census data to give best estimates but that until the approval of the recommendations within the report, the team were not in a position to progress, however this impact assessment would be added as a further Appendix to the report when it progressed to Cabinet. The Panel were advised that research showed few authorities offering financial support with garden waste subscriptions but that this would be fully investigated in order to prove due diligence. It was also

advised that residents could share bins with their neighbours thereby sharing costs.

- 7.17 The Panel heard that the Council were still waiting on information and clarification from DEFRA surrounding the introduction of food waste collections. It was also stated that the Joint Administration had inherited good services from the previous administration and wanted to improve upon them, which the introduction of a garden waste subscription would support.
- 7.18 Following a question from Councillor Gleadow, the Panel were assured that the team were happy to update on progress of projects and had an open door policy to discuss this.
- 7.19 Councillor Corney observed that the Panel had heard a lot about what other Councils were doing but that it would be advisable to focus on Huntingdonshire. He further observed that recent flooding in Ramsey had been caused by the fly tipping of garden waste and expressed concern that the removal of the free collection service would exasperate this problem. In response to Councillor Corney's concerns around fly tipping, the Panel heard that the team worked hard to manage this issue across the district with increased intelligence. It was also advised that data obtained from Fenland District Council, showed a recent reduction in fly tipping despite having a chargeable garden waste service. Councillor McAdam expressed concern that fines for fly tipping were not prohibitive and that garden waste tipping would be harder to trace back to its origin than household waste.
- 7.20 In response to a question from Councillor Blackwell, the Panel were advised that an alternative option of a three month suspension of the service had been considered over other time period suspensions as current data showed that due to the seasonal nature of the demand, there were three quiet months over the winter where demand for collections is low.
- 7.21 Following a further comment from Councillor Corney on what alternative options had been considered, the Panel heard that the alternatives considered had not made the necessary financial impacts required, therefore the proposal within the report had been put forward. The Panel were further advised that despite this being an unpopular proposal, no viable alternatives had been proposed.
- 7.22 Councillor Jennings stated his concerns about the proposal, including that;
- although Council Tax may be seen as regressive, nothing is more aggressive than a flat rate fee applied across the district;
 - he felt the member briefing had been more to gauge reaction and how Councillors would support the proposal to their residents despite being prior to the report being available;
 - the language of the report gave conflicting implications – namely that the assumed subscription fees generated would be more than the cost to run the service, therefore it was suggested that they would be subsidising other services;

- the Council Tax comparison table would benefit from the addition of which Councils current charge for their Garden Waste service;
- it is common to have a budget gap within the MTFs and that the immediate financial pressures had already been addressed, therefore a proposed delay in implementation would not affect this;
- the assumptions in Table 3 do not stand up to scrutiny due to conflicting detail;
- there was not enough rigour in the financial modelling;
- there was a query whether the impact on the grey bin collections had been considered; and
- there was worry that people would resort to hard landscaping their gardens to avoid production of garden waste.

7.23 Following which, the Panel were advised that;

- the costs to run the service within the report did not include service wide factors such as vehicle acquisition and insurance;
- the MTFs only has certainty for year 1 and that following that it would be in jeopardy;
- Table 3 has been worked from the bottom up, but that the proposed development of 12,000 new homes within the district by 2025 has not been included as they have not yet been constructed;
- the finances had been robustly tested; and
- the issue of how to protect vulnerable residents had been considered, however it was unfair to assume that those in lower Council Tax Bands used the garden waste service less than those in a higher band.

7.24 Councillors Cawley, Jennings, Martin and Lowe all expressed concern over the timing of the proposal and suggested that it be postponed to 2025 when it was hoped that the current economic crisis may be alleviated. Councillor McAdam observed that whilst the timing was of concern, postponing implementation could result in higher charges to households to compensate for the delay. Councillor Jennings proposed an additional recommendation be added to the Cabinet report;
h) to pause progress for 12 months to take time to take advantage of detailed reports and financial implications before bringing the scheme back into the democratic cycle.
However, this motion was not supported by the Panel.

7.25 Assurance was sought from Councillor Gardener that should the scheme go ahead, there would be no redundancies or cuts to staff. The Panel heard that whilst it was difficult to make assurances with the unknown variables of take up, it was anticipated that a reduction in the use of agency staff and natural turnover would ensure the proposed staffing finances within the report would be met.

7.26 Councillor Martin expressed his opinion that there were compelling reasons why the report should be looked at again and again questioned whether the local recycling centres would be able to cope with the demand. He felt that the report had a lot of detail missing and that it was hard to scrutinise the detail due to its absence.

7.27 The Panel heard, in response to further questions from Councillors Gardener and Pickering, that an impact assessment had been done to

cover the anticipated impact on the local recycling centres and that this would be monitored and assessed as the proposals moved forward.

- 7.28 Following a question from Councillor Shaw, the Panel were advised that residents would be able to keep their current green bins, however only those who subscribed to the service would have them collected.
- 7.29 Councillor Lowe stated that she was aware of residents who were maintaining verges and disposing of that waste in their green bins, the Panel heard that all Council mowing schedules were on time at present and that Councillors could submit details of such occurrences to the Operations team for further investigation.
- 7.30 The Panel were assured that a robust contract was in place to ensure the current recycling of the waste into compost by Amey would be maintained.
- 7.31 Concern was expressed by Councillor Alban that there may be teething problems should the scheme go ahead and enquired about a Plan B. The Panel were assured that the team would work to optimise the route to ensure best value for money as well as the expected reduction in CO2 emissions, this would be constantly under review to ensure it best fits the needs of residents and the Council.
- 7.32 The Panel were further assured of the capability of the Officers in devising and delivering a scheme which would fit the needs of the Council whilst still delivering for residents and that the report contained all the information needed for Cabinet to make an informed decision.
- 7.33 Following the discussion, the Panel were informed that their comments would be added to the Cabinet report in order for Cabinet to make a decision upon the recommendations and additionally, the Panel request that the Cabinet consider adding the following recommendation to their report;
- g) to agree to complete a review of the impact of the introduction of a household waste subscription service on lower income residents.

8. KEY IMPACTS / RISKS AND MITIGATIONS

- 8.1 **There is a risk that subscription uptake may be lower than anticipated** impacting the potential to provide a self-funding and sustainable service. We took a sample of 60 authorities across England with a chargeable garden waste services and average subscription take up rates were around 40-50%. However, these are indicative figures and do not guarantee subscription uptake in our district. Also, to be noted, should the subscription levels be low, the cost of running a garden waste service would be low due to fewer resource requirements.
- 8.2 **Reduced Recycling Rates** - The implementation of this scheme will reduce the overall tonnage of compostable material sent for processing and will therefore potentially reduce the Council's overall combined recycling and composting rate by around 7%, to approximately 51%. Work is in progress to maximise the recycling generated through the Blue Bin

service, and key messages will be planned on materials such as cardboard, shredded paper, food waste and garden waste. For households not wishing to subscribe, and to mitigate the environmental impact, a number of additional incentive schemes are to be considered and made available from 1 April 2024. We are actively seeking input from District, Town and Parish Councils about the desirability and feasibility of these incentives to identify those that offer the most value. Options could include:

- 8.2.1 Subsidised price home composters** - promoted along with information on home composting. In order to reduce the volume of waste generated, and to minimise food waste entering the residual waste stream.
 - 8.2.2 Saturday Freighters** – deployment of vehicles every Saturday between the months of April and September in prearranged locations across the district.
 - 8.2.1 Free loose compost** – working with Town and Parish Councils, along with Allotment Associations, to get residents engaged with composting in their community.
 - 8.2.2 Community compost schemes** – working with Town and Parish Councils, along with Allotment Associations to enable and influence community led composting schemes.
- 8.3 Waste rounds** - The modelling of new separate garden waste rounds for customers may 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 help mitigate this we will be using a specialist company to create the rounds with as little changes as possible to current collection days, in addition we will develop an extensive communications plan to ensure residents and internal/external stakeholders are fully aware of any potential changes. It is unknown at present how many households will be affected by a change in service and this would need to be considered alongside the emerging separate food waste collections.
- 8.4 Potential fly tipping** - Officers have been investigating the likelihood of increased fly-tipping based on data from authorities that already charge for garden waste collections. This data shows that the majority have not seen any increase in instances of garden waste fly-tipping, with only a handful reporting a marginal increase in the first year of implementation, as in reality it is more likely that waste is displaced into the grey bin. Huntingdonshire and similar areas do have existing effective methods for clearing waste and prosecuting offenders.
- 8.5** Huntingdonshire monitors 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.
- 8.6 Automation and IT Systems** - There is a need for significant automation and review of IT systems to scale the current subscription method to the

numbers anticipated. Incentives such as Early Bird discounts will be investigated in order to allow customers to join the scheme over a longer period of time and reduce the risk of processes being unable to meet demand. The feasibility of these schemes will be evaluated against the resources and time required to implement new technologies, before confirmed dates, processes and payment options can be agreed.

9. TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

9.1 **Stage 1 (April/August 2023)** – Project Manager to be appointed to lead on the implementation of a chargeable garden waste service in Huntingdonshire. They will bring together key stakeholders (3CICT Development Team, Call Centre, Waste Team and Communication Team) to deliver a project plan.

9.2 Project team in place to deliver:

- Payment system for cards and direct debit process in place
- Integrations between payment system and route/schedule system
- Contract is in place for subscription stickers
- Feasibility of incentives will be consulted with Town and Parish Councils
- Modelling of new collection rounds completed
- Communications timetable (Website, letters, media etc...) to include: info about the new service, new instructions on what to do with food waste, tips on reducing food waste, and guidance on how to dispose of garden waste if you are not subscribed.

9.3 **Stage 2 (September/December 2023)** – Campaign Launch (bin tags to all properties, website/social promotions):

- Potential for Early bird subscription form available online TBC
- Subscriptions available by debit or credit card

9.4 **Stage 3 (January/February 2024)** – Campaign mailout with letter to all residents with Council Tax Bills

9.5 **Stage 4 (February/March 2024)** Campaign Launch letters to all those who have signed up advising of new collection dates along with systems updates and bin calendars live

9.6 **Stage 5 (Monday 1st April 2024)** – chargeable garden waste subscription service Go Live. Crews to leave a tag on bins which haven't been paid for.

9.7 **Stage 6 (April 2025)** - Performance to be reported back through the political cycle

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

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

11. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

11.1 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.

12. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 Costs in the first year will be higher as a result of set up costs including service redesign, temporary staff resources, website redesign, legal costs, back-office systems and also resources required to recover and recycle any returned unused wheeled bins. These one-off costs are estimated to be up to £850k.
- 12.2 Costs to the County's Waste PFI Contract have also been highlighted as an impact to the Cambridgeshire taxpayers and also implications to this Council as a direct result of this proposal.

13. ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 In February 2023, the Council formally recognised the Climate Crisis and set ambitious targets for reduction of our carbon emissions.
- 13.2 The implementation of this scheme will reduce the overall tonnage of compostable material sent for processing and will therefore potentially reduce the Councils' overall combined recycling and composting rate by around 7%, to approximately 51%. However, work is also in progress to maximise the recycling generated through the Blue Bin service, and clear communications on materials such as cardboard, shredded paper, food waste and garden waste are planned.
- 13.3 Not all properties in Huntingdonshire require the service and only those residents who have a need for the service will subscribe. This approach may reduce vehicle movement numbers and positively reduce the CO₂ emissions of the waste collection service. However, this will be dependent on take up of the service and also the potential implications of separate food waste collections.
- 13.4 Table 4 shows an analysis of the environmental implications in relations to CO₂e emissions moving from our current garden waste collection arrangements to a chargeable garden waste collection service, excluding any implications that the separate food waste collections may incur.
- 13.5 The Strategic Waste Systems Review 2020 undertaken by Local Partnerships identifies once a chargeable garden waste service is implemented 31% of garden waste disappears due to behaviour change.
- 13.6 The forecasted CO₂e emissions for a chargeable garden waste service in Huntingdonshire is 802.79 tonnes. This is a 369.17 tonne reduction from our current garden waste service. These are based on the Carbon Warm factors calculations from DEFRA, excluding any implications that the separate food waste collections may incur.

Table 4 – shows the total Carbon Dioxide Emissions Equivalent (t.CO₂e)

	Landfilled	Current Situation	Anticipated Impact - for a Chargeable Garden Waste Service			Positive Outcome
	If Organic waste was Landfilled	Baseline tonnage - composting (average for past 3 years)	Total t.CO ₂ e impact for a chargeable garden waste service	Impact from Chargeable Garden Waste - (45% Participation rate with 65% tonnage captured)	10% of tonnage diverted to residual (Captured through MBT)	Home composted or behaviour change
Tonnes collected	21703	21703	14866.59	14106.95	759.64	6836.76t disappears
t.CO ₂ e *	12848	1171.96	802.79	761.77	41.02	369.18 t.CO ₂ e * saved
Recycling Rate (waste diverted from landfill)		58%	50% (this includes Saturday Freighters)			

14. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

- 14.1 This is a financial decision which is being made due to an inherited budget shortfall and the need to protect valued services.
- 14.2 This combined with the ongoing decline in funding from Central Government, the expected significant reduction in business rates, rising costs and high inflation, has resulted in a substantial budget gap in the coming years. Therefore, the Council must make difficult decisions, including charging for this fly service. Delivery of this work has been included as part of the overall medium term financial strategy (MTFS) saving and income proposals.
- 14.3 The current garden waste collection costs the Council at least £800,000 per year in directly attributable variable costs, and as the District expands, these costs will rise. Meeting the demand will require additional vehicles and staff. By introducing a garden waste subscription service, we can ensure that the service remains available to those residents who wish to subscribe, and the council can allocate funds to other essential services. This decision is being recommended by officers, whilst acknowledging the potential implications to the County Council's Waste PFI Contract, recycling rates, the future changes that would be required as a result of separate food waste collections, and the additional financial charges that may be passed to this Council as a result.

15. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

- Appendix 1 - Garden waste collection options considered (*initial analysis*)
- Appendix 2 - Chargeable Garden Waste Service Terms and Conditions
- Appendix 3 - Huntingdonshire Garden Waste Service Frequently Asked Questions
- Appendix 4 – Equality Impact Assessment

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Appendix 1 – Garden waste collection options considered (*initial analysis*)

Option	Proposed change description	Savings	Impact on staffing	Transition costs (one off charges to move to new system)	Waste and Resource strategy (WRS) alignment	Impact on recycling rates and collection tonnages	RECAP partnership alignment	PFI contract and other potential impacts
Do Nothing	Continue with fortnightly free co-mingled Garden and food waste collections, cutting other essential council services to remain financially prudent	No savings-service costs HDC more than £800k annually this will increase every 3-4yrs as the district gets bigger and additional rounds are required to meet the demand.	No impact on current staffing levels	None required	Some alignment- Although no details available as yet, government has suggested free garden waste collections, although it had mandated separate food waste collection in the environment bill, again no details have yet been released on when this will be implemented or funding available for rollout	Neutral-there would be no impact on current collection tonnages or recycling rate Current recycling rate 58%	Partly, Fenland and Peterborough both have fully chargeable garden collection services. Rest are on fortnightly free collection with opt in subscription service for additional bins	No request of contract change required, no DEFRA approval required and no potential cost of this to HDC
Stop collecting Garden Waste altogether	Co-mingled Garden and food waste is non statutory, HDC could stop doing this	Indicative figures of revenue saving of £800k annually £200k annual capital savings on vehicle replacement costs	Indicative figures of 21 staff would be at risk	Indicative figures of £200k staff restructure costs, £250k for collection of green bins from residents, £60k comms, £100k additional temporary staff for customer services to cope with increased traffic through call centre due to changes.	Food waste and garden waste collections are an integral part of WRS Government have intimated they would like LA's to provide free garden waste collections to all properties along with a separate free weekly food waste collection. No further information is yet unavailable from Government on timescales or whether chargeable would still be permitted.	Large negative impact- we would reduce collection tonnages of compostable material to zero from current 23,000 tonnes Recycling rate will sit around 39%-	Does not align with any of our partners.	Contract change request would have to be submitted, potential multi-million-pound compensation event for HDC Additional costs for CCC as footfall increase through Household Recycling Centres (HRC) potential increase in fly tipping. Increased refuse due to food waste being diverted to grey bin from green.

<p>Fully chargeable collections</p>	<p>Charge for garden waste collections only (fee to be agreed) Fenland charge £45 pa and Peterborough charge £50 for first bin and £75 for two bins. HDC could charge average of £47.50 In UK approx. 160 LA's charge for garden collections and is estimated to provide £74m in additional income pa</p>	<p>Indicative figures further to full financial modelling: Depending on participation rate, you could look at generating after deducting operating costs of Approx£450,000 Income 30%- £700k pa 40%-£1.1m pa 50%£1.4m pa</p> <p>This service would only cover garden waste and food waste would need to be diverted into the grey bin</p>	<p>Indicative figures further to full financial modelling: Reducing staff by 11 crew members. Potential further staff reductions depending on how the routes evolve, driver+1 instead of driver +2 currently</p>	<p>Indicative figures further to full financial modelling: £100k restructuring costs. £250k bin removals and redeliveries etc. £100k comms £70k call centre staff to handle volume of queries due to changes</p>	<p>Food waste and garden waste collections are an integral part of WRS Government have intimated they would like LA's to provide free garden waste collections to all properties along with a separate free weekly food waste collection. No further information is yet unavailable from Government on timescales or whether chargeable would still be permitted.</p>	<p>Large negative impact on recycling rates but hugely dependant on participation rates. Using Fenland and Peterborough's current recycling rates as a benchmark we could be looking anywhere between 40%-50% recycling rate</p>	<p>Partly, Fenland and Peterborough both have fully chargeable garden collection services.</p>	<p>PFI contract change request would need approval from Thalia, DEFRA and CCC. Additional costs may be incurred by HDC for the changes. Unknown until form submitted and reviewed.</p> <p>Residents may disengage from recycling altogether, which could increase contamination and further reductions in recycling rates.</p>
<p>Suspend garden waste collections during winter</p>	<p>Suspend garden waste collections between 1st Dec-1st March (3 full months of lowest collection tonnages)</p>	<p>Indicative figures of fuel saving of approx. -£34k Agency staff savings £12k as garden crews are redeployed into other areas.</p>	<p>No impact on staff numbers as they would be redeployed into other areas.</p>	<p>Indicative figures of comms £15k annually this would include bin hangers and stickers</p>	<p>There is no clear details as yet from Government regarding WRS and collection consistency and garden collections.</p>	<p>Low impact on recycling figures 2,700 tonnes were collected during the same period in 2021 Recycling rates is estimated to reduce to around 54%</p>	<p>S/Cambs reduce their garden collections to monthly during the winter period.</p>	<p>PFI contract change form would need to be submitted and agreed by Thalia, DEFRA and CCC.</p> <p>Food waste would be diverted into the grey bin, it may be difficult to get residents to revert back during the summer months. We could be challenged for refunds from residents using our garden waste</p>

								subscription service as they will be losing 3 months of paid service from HDC. Current subscription service costs £55 for additional garden bin income is around £200k pa
3 weekly garden collections	Reduce collection frequency from current fortnightly to 3 weekly	Indicative figures of savings £150k staff reduction of 6 £42k fuel, servicing, tyres etc. Capital saving of £400k on vehicle replacement as would require 2 less rounds	Indicative figures of staffing would be reduced by 2 drivers and 4 loaders	Indicative figures of £40k restructure of staff £60k comms. £30k call centre staff. Rerouting software, round data etc. £40k	WRS seeks to gain consistency in collections across the country, currently no details are available on what that looks like as government have yet to release details it could mean however, that we are mandated to provide free fortnightly collections for garden waste.	Low impact on recycling rates as numbers of household serviced annually is decreased. Estimated recycling rate to be around 52%	Would not align with any of the RECAP partners	PFI contract request form would need to be submitted and approved by Thalia, DEFRA and CCC before changes commence, could have financial implications for HDC to make contract changes. Increased costs for CCC as footfall increases at HRC's and potential increase in fly tipping Subscription garden service fees would be challenged as frequency of collections reduced for a chargeable service

Appendix 2 – Chargeable Garden Waste Service Terms and Conditions

Costs of service for current and new customers for the period of July 2023-March 2024

2nd green bin customers (current) renewing in July 2023 will be charged **£41.25**

Service will run from 1 July 2023-31 March 2024 current charge of **£55** for 12 months will be pro rata for 9 months (**£41.25**) to align with new service implementation, as original 2nd green bin system was set up to run from July -June

New customer subscriptions for the period of July 2023-March 2024 will also pay **£41.25** irrespective of when during that time period they subscribe in line with the current terms and conditions. Additional bins up to a max of 4 will cost **£41.25** each

Customers will be contacted as usual to remind of renewal and changes to service in May 2023.

These customers will be contacted again in September-December 2023 along with all residents to inform of changes to the service as a whole.

Costs of service for current and new customers for the period of April 2024-March 2025

The cost of the full subscription service from April 2024 will be **£57.50** (£1.10 per week)

An early bird offer will be included in year 1 of the scheme, for customers purchasing subscriptions between 1st December 2023 and 31 January 2024 and will cost **£50** (less than £1 per week) This is to incentivise residents to subscribe to the new garden waste service early, ensuring the new arrangements are communicated to residents and that subscription packs are available for the 1st April.

Outside of these dates the cost of the service will be **£57.50** for service from the joining date until March 2025. There will be no pro-rata discount for those joining the scheme mid-year.

Additional garden bins up to a max of 4 will cost **£30** each, with a maximum total of subscription bins of 5 per household

All future fees will be set in line with the current fees and charging process of the Council. Considerations were made around providing a discounted scheme for those on low incomes or in receipt of benefits. However, this would be extremely complex to manage, expensive to administer and hugely resource intensive. An alternative scheme could be explored to allow town and parish councils to award a limited number of free garden waste subscriptions to residents most in need.

Proposed payment methods

Working in collaboration with our finance team, the preferred payment method is Direct Debit (DD) with a card payment option as an alternative method.

Terms & Conditions

The green wheeled bin remains the property of Huntingdonshire District Council. It could be reclaimed if you no longer pay for the garden waste collection service.

Not all properties are suitable for this service. This may be due to access restrictions for our collection vehicles or lack of space to either store the bin or place it out for collection.

You are responsible for the security of the wheeled bin. A delivery fee will apply to replace lost, stolen or damaged bins. (Fee **£15** in line with current bin delivery charge)

If the collection crew are responsible for damaging a bin or if it falls into the rear of the collection vehicle, we will replace it free of charge.

We will not empty the bin if it is moved to another property. However, subscriptions can be transferred to new properties within Huntingdonshire if customers move home.

If the wheeled bin cannot be safely manoeuvred and positioned onto the vehicle, or the vehicle cannot lift the bin due to the weight of the bin, then it will be left unemptied, and a rejection hanger left where possible. If the bin is found to be too heavy, the householder will be required to remove sufficient material from the bin and dispose of it in a responsible manner. Once sufficient weight has been removed from the bin, we will collect it on the next scheduled collection day. This is in line with current processes.

Subscribe online at www.Huntingdonshire.gov.uk/gardenwaste

We will not provide refunds if customers move out of Huntingdonshire or when subscriptions are cancelled. This is in line with current processes. The cost of managing such a process is disproportionate to the low cost of the service.

Operational issues or poor weather could cause the service to be cancelled without return or refund. Details will be posted on the Council's website.

Appendix 3 – Huntingdonshire Garden Waste Service Frequently Asked Questions

The following information also forms part of the terms and conditions for the garden waste collection service.

Q. What can I put into my green bin?

If you subscribe to the service, the following garden waste can go in the green bin:

Yes please

- ✓ Weeds
- ✓ Hedge trimmings
- ✓ Small twigs and branches (less than 2.5cm (1") in diameter)
- ✓ Grass cuttings
- ✓ Flowers, plants, and wind fall fruit
- ✓ Leaves
- ✓ Shredded paper
- ✓ Small animal bedding (vegetarian only)

No thank you

- ✗ Plastic bags or bin bags
- ✗ Flowerpots and trays
- ✗ Soil
- ✗ Stones or rubble
- ✗ Branches or logs (larger than 2.5cm (1") in diameter)
- ✗ Any other household rubbish
- ✗ Textiles
- ✗ Food waste

Remember

Garden waste must be put into the bin loose - do not use bags.

On collection day you will need to place the bin out for collection before 6:30am. Please make sure the handle faces the road and the subscription sticker is clearly visible.

Important:

Any bin containing plastics, textiles, soil, general waste, food waste, or rubble will not be emptied. Any bins which are considered by the collection team to be too heavy for safe handling will also not be emptied.

Please check your collection days at www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/bins

All garden waste must be in the bin and the lid closed. Do not leave any waste outside your bin - it will not be collected, with the exception of real Christmas trees in season.

The wheeled bin remains the property of Huntingdonshire District Council. If you have not paid for the garden waste collection service, we reserve the right to not collect the bin.

Q. How often will my green bin be emptied?

A. Your garden waste will be collected once every two weeks throughout the year. Changes to collection days will occur as a result of Christmas and New Year.

Q. Can I have more than one green bin?

A. Yes, you can have up to a max of 4 garden bins per property. However, please be aware that you will need to pay an annual subscription for each bin to be collected.

Q. What should I do if my garden waste collection is missed?

- A. We will only return for missed collections in the following circumstances
- The bin was placed out before 6.30am on the day of collection
 - The right collection point was used
 - In the case of assisted collections there was access to get the bin e.g. gate unlocked
 - The sticker indicating the bin has been paid for is clearly displayed on the rear of the bin under the handle
 - A rejected hanger has not been put on the bin
 - A crew report has not been received regarding the bin e.g. heavy, excessive waste
 - The missed bin has been reported within 3 days of your normal day of collection. Refunds will not be given for missed collections, they should be reported to the Council and we will arrange recollection if the circumstances above have been complied with.

To report the missed collection, go to www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/missedbin

Q. How will your collection crews know I have paid for a collection each year?

A. When we receive your payment, we will send you a unique addressed sticker to put on the rear of your green bin. A new sticker will be issued each year upon payment of the subscription. If you subscribe to more than one bin, you will receive a sticker for each bin.

Q. How quickly after I pay can I expect the service to start?

A. Once payment has been received the council will arrange for a letter of confirmation and subscription sticker to the relevant property. All subscriptions purchased in advance will be posted in bulk during early March each year.

Q. Can I pay by direct debit?

A. Yes, there will be the option for an annual DD to be set up.

Q. I don't currently have a bin. Can I still sign up for the service?

A. Yes, you can sign up and pay for the service at any time. Once you have paid for the service, the council will arrange for the delivery of a green bin. You will also receive a subscription sticker in the post.

Q. Can I share a green bin with a neighbour?

A. Yes – you can make a personal arrangement with a neighbour to share the cost of the additional garden bin service. We will allocate the bin to the property that pays for it and will withdraw it if payment is not received.

If you are sharing your garden waste bin with a neighbour, the householder which pays the annual charge will have overall responsibility for the bin as a bin can only be allocated to one address. It is the responsibility of the named householder if the bin is contaminated, misused, or needs replacing.

Q. What can I do with my excess garden waste or if I don't join the scheme?

A. We can only collect garden waste contained within the green bin.

Home composting is the most environmentally friendly way of dealing with garden waste. To purchase a subsidised compost bin, visit www.getcomposting.com or call 0800 316 4454.

Cambridgeshire County Council Household Recycling Centres in Bluntisham, Alconbury and St Neots take household garden waste materials. See their website for details and opening times

Q. What if I decide not to use the service for a period? Will I get a refund?

A. No, we are unable to refund any payments for this service.

Q. Will the Council replace lost or stolen green bins?

A. You are responsible for the security of the wheeled bin. You can request a replacement bin and a delivery fee will apply to replace lost, stolen, or damaged bins.

If the collection crew are responsible for damaging a bin or if it falls into the rear of the collection vehicle, we will replace it free of charge

Q. What happens if my green bin is damaged?

A. If our collection crew record that they have been responsible for damaging your bin or it falls into the rear of the vehicle, we will replace it free of charge; otherwise, the usual delivery charge will apply.

Q. Can I buy my own green bin instead of the Huntingdonshire District Council ones?

A. No, we will not empty green bins that do not meet our specification (including make, model and logos), so cannot offer the service using other bins.

Q. Are all properties suitable for this service?

A. We will do our best to help customers access the service. However, some properties may not be suitable for this service due to lack of space to store the bin, or to put it out for collection. We reserve the right to decide whether or not we can provide the garden waste collection service via the green bin.

Q. Why does the Council charge for garden waste bin collections?

A. The Council has no statutory duty to collect garden waste but can make a reasonable charge where the service is offered. Some customers in Huntingdonshire do not have gardens and many householders compost at home. Therefore, with the pressure on funding and services, the decision was made that those customers who use the service should contribute to funding the service. We plan to reinvest funding into reducing the environmental impact of the services we deliver.

Q. Can I pay by instalments?

A. There is not an option to pay by instalments

Q. Can I put food waste in the green bin?

A. Legislation sets out that only garden waste can be charged for. That means we can no longer ask residents to put their food waste in their green bin.

Q. Will I still pay the full subscription if I sign up part way through the year?

A. Yes, you can sign up to receive the service at any point during the year. The annual subscription runs from 1 April until 31 March each year. If you sign up part way through the year you will be charged for the full year. The subscription will need renewing before the next April for the service to continue.

Subscribe online at www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/gardenwaste

1. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

- 1.1 The Panel discussed the Household Garden Waste Subscription Service at its meeting on 6th July 2023.
- 1.2 Councillor Criswell expressed his anger over the report and proposed subscription, giving his reasons as due to;
- the way that the proposal had been received by members of the public;
 - failure to use Overview and Scrutiny to help develop the proposal;
 - introduction of a charge on an existing service;
 - charging residents who are trying to do the right thing by recycling green waste;
 - disproportionately affecting elderly residents who enjoy gardening but may be on a low income;
 - no consultation with residents on the proposed subscription charge;
 - concern that the make up of the joint administration politically is not one that residents had voted for; and
 - that Executive Councillors are not owning the proposed subscription introduction and suggesting that the decision to introduce had been made by Officers.
- 1.3 The Panel were assured that whilst the proposed fee of £57.50 had been modelled by Officers, the proposed subscription had been proposed by the Joint Administration.
- 1.4 Councillor Gardener observed that the report and Executive Councillors had highlighted that the fee was being introduced for those who used the service and enquired if that meant that residents could request refunds for those services which their Council Tax pays for but that they do not use. The Panel heard that the Joint Administration were aware that this would not be a popular decision but that it was necessary to protect the service for those residents who wished to continue to use it. The Panel heard that garden waste collection is a non-statutory collection and that the Council is no longer able to deliver this service free of charge. The proposed changes would also allow local business opportunity and innovation in opening up opportunities for alternative waste collections.
- 1.5 Concern was expressed by Councillor Cawley that the figures within the report were scare tactics and may be working to fund a shortfall that may not happen. He also queried the quoted reduction in CO2 emissions given that many residents may choose to dispose of their garden waste at local recycling centres by private car instead of subscribing to the service.
- 1.6 In response to these questions, the Panel heard that;
- the shortfall figure of £8.3 million was a worst case scenario but that without action there would be a shortfall which would accumulate year on year; and
 - that the predicted CO2 emissions reduction was due to a reduction of refuse vehicles on the road, due to reduced collections and also reduced waste to be reprocessed.

- 1.7 Councillors Cawley and Lowe enquired how it was anticipated that residents would create less green waste should they not have a green bin. The Panel were advised that analysis of other Councils who have undergone the same process, showed that those without a garden waste receptacle generated less green waste. It was further advised that residents also had the option to compost, to use their garden waste as mulch or alternatively to dispose of it at their local recycling centre.
- 1.8 Following an observation from Councillor Cawley that home composting of food waste would generate more methane emissions, the Panel heard that current analysis of waste within each of the three bins currently provided by the Council showed that more food waste was disposed of between the grey and blue bins than the green bin, therefore a change in this behaviour was not anticipated.
- 1.9 Councillor Shaw observed that whilst he believed all Councillors were unhappy with the decision to introduce the subscription service, the reality was that it would be a viable way to address the gap in the finances. Furthermore, the Panel heard that the Section 151 Officer would be unable to sign off the accounts without the introduction of the subscription and the continuation of the service.
- 1.10 The lack of public consultation on the proposed subscription service was queried by Councillors Alban and Lowe who observed that an ongoing consultation on Electrical Vehicle Charging had already been met with a good response from the public. The Panel heard that there is no option to continue the service free of charge therefore a consultation would be immaterial and unreasonable, however it was stressed that public consultation would be held following approval of the recommendations to gauge public opinion on other aspects of the proposed changes. Councillor Alban expressed pride over the good recycling rates achieved by residents in the district to date and shared his concerns that the poorest residents would be disproportionately affected which he claimed was at odds with the ethos of the Joint Administration. The Panel heard that by introducing the proposed subscription service on a non-statutory service, the Council would be able to refocus spending on statutory services. The Panel were further appraised that the report had been brought through the democratic cycle of meetings following concerns expressed at the Council meeting in February 2023.
- 1.11 Following a further enquiry from Councillor Alban regarding the Saturday working detailed within the report, the Panel were advised that this had been budgeted for as overtime and that this work would assist those residents not subscribed to the scheme. The alternative options available under this part of the scheme would form part of the proposed consultation to residents.
- 1.12 It was observed by Councillor Pickering that this was not an easy decision to make and he empathised with those who had had to make the decision, and enquired whether there was potential to offer assistance for those who are in receipt of Council Tax Support.

1.13 Councillors Harvey and Hunt expressed concerns over the impact of the proposed subscription to poorer residents and enquired around alternative payment options aside from annual payments. The Panel heard that the proposal would be to collect the annual fee during the annual break in Council Tax payment collections but that further work would be undertaken to investigate alternative payment options. Councillor Hunt also observed that he had seen press reports stating that the Council was in a good financial position, however the Panel heard that there were not sufficient reserves to cover the projected deficit without cuts to statutory services if this service were to continue without a subscription charge.

1.14 Councillor Hunt proposed to add an additional recommendation to the Cabinet report, this recommendation was seconded by Councillor Harvey and the Panel voted in favour of forwarding the proposed recommendation to Cabinet.

g) to agree to complete a review of the impact of the introduction of a household waste subscription service on lower income residents.

7.15 Councillor Bywater stated that he could not support the proposal and shared his comments and concerns on the proposals within the report including;

- observation that the budget deficit had been present for the past 12 years therefore was not a new issue;
- residents are struggling financially at this time, therefore unreasonable to put further strain on household budgets;
- proposed subscription service undermines the Council's commitment to protect it's residents and to support them in combating Climate Change;
- affecting residents without transport;
- encouraging fly tipping or burning of garden waste;
- encouraging vermin through food waste in garden compost;
- lack of environmental impact assessment;
- opposition from residents; and
- affecting the ability to form a sustainable and inclusive community across the District.

1.16 Councillor Bywater further stated that he would not support the proposal as there was no financial data to support the cost of this proposal and how this would affect the projected financials within the report, he also queried how Cabinet could make an informed decision on the recommendations without the full data to support them. The Panel were assured that a quality impact assessment had been developed and analysed alongside available census data to give best estimates but that until the approval of the recommendations within the report, the team were not in a position to progress, however this impact assessment would be added as a further Appendix to the report when it progressed to Cabinet. The Panel were advised that research showed few authorities offering financial support with garden waste subscriptions but that this would be fully investigated in order to prove due diligence. It was also advised that residents could share bins with their neighbours thereby sharing costs.

- 1.17 The Panel heard that the Council were still waiting on information and clarification from DEFRA surrounding the introduction of food waste collections. It was also stated that the Joint Administration had inherited good services from the previous administration and wanted to improve upon them, which the introduction of a garden waste subscription would support.
- 1.18 Following a question from Councillor Gleadow, the Panel were assured that the team were happy to update on progress of projects and had an open door policy to discuss this.
- 1.19 Councillor Corney observed that the Panel had heard a lot about what other Councils were doing but that it would be advisable to focus on Huntingdonshire. He further observed that recent flooding in Ramsey had been caused by the fly tipping of garden waste and expressed concern that the removal of the free collection service would exasperate this problem. In response to Councillor Corney's concerns around fly tipping, the Panel heard that the team worked hard to manage this issue across the district with increased intelligence. It was also advised that data obtained from Fenland District Council, showed a recent reduction in fly tipping despite having a chargeable garden waste service. Councillor McAdam expressed concern that fines for fly tipping were not prohibitive and that garden waste tipping would be harder to trace back to its origin than household waste.
- 1.20 In response to a question from Councillor Blackwell, the Panel were advised that an alternative option of a three month suspension of the service had been considered over other time period suspensions as current data showed that due to the seasonal nature of the demand, there were three quiet months over the winter where demand for collections is low.
- 1.21 Following a further comment from Councillor Corney on what alternative options had been considered, the Panel heard that the alternatives considered had not made the necessary financial impacts required, therefore the proposal within the report had been put forward. The Panel were further advised that despite this being an unpopular proposal, no viable alternatives had been proposed.
- 1.22 Councillor Jennings stated his concerns about the proposal, including that;
- although Council Tax may be seen as regressive, nothing is more aggressive than a flat rate fee applied across the district;
 - he felt the member briefing had been more to gauge reaction and how Councillors would support the proposal to their residents despite being prior to the report being available;
 - the language of the report gave conflicting implications – namely that the assumed subscription fees generated would be more than the cost to run the service, therefore it was suggested that they would be subsidising other services;
 - the Council Tax comparison table would benefit from the addition of which Councils current charge for their Garden Waste service;

- it is common to have a budget gap within the MTFS and that the immediate financial pressures had already been addressed, therefore a proposed delay in implementation would not affect this;
- the assumptions in Table 3 do not stand up to scrutiny due to conflicting detail;
- there was not enough rigour in the financial modelling;
- there was a query whether the impact on the grey bin collections had been considered; and
- there was worry that people would resort to hard landscaping their gardens to avoid production of garden waste.

7.23 Following which, the Panel were advised that;

- the costs to run the service within the report did not include service wide factors such as vehicle acquisition and insurance;
- the MTFS only has certainty for year 1 and that following that it would be in jeopardy;
- Table 3 has been worked from the bottom up, but that the proposed development of 12,000 new homes within the district by 2025 has not been included as they have not yet been constructed;
- the finances had been robustly tested; and
- the issue of how to protect vulnerable residents had been considered, however it was unfair to assume that those in lower Council Tax Bands used the garden waste service less than those in a higher band.

7.24 Councillors Cawley, Jennings, Martin and Lowe all expressed concern over the timing of the proposal and suggested that it be postponed to 2025 when it was hoped that the current economic crisis may be alleviated. Councillor McAdam observed that whilst the timing was of concern, postponing implementation could result in higher charges to households to compensate for the delay. Councillor Jennings proposed an additional recommendation be added to the Cabinet report;

h) to pause progress for 12 months to take time to take advantage of detailed reports and financial implications before bringing the scheme back into the democratic cycle.

However, this motion was not supported by the Panel.

7.25 Assurance was sought from Councillor Gardener that should the scheme go ahead, there would be no redundancies or cuts to staff. The Panel heard that whilst it was difficult to make assurances with the unknown variables of take up, it was anticipated that a reduction in the use of agency staff and natural turnover would ensure the proposed staffing finances within the report would be met.

7.26 Councillor Martin expressed his opinion that there were compelling reasons why the report should be looked at again and again questioned whether the local recycling centres would be able to cope with the demand. He felt that the report had a lot of detail missing and that it was hard to scrutinise the detail due to its absence.

- 7.27 The Panel heard, in response to further questions from Councillors Gardener and Pickering, that an impact assessment had been done to cover the anticipated impact on the local recycling centres and that this would be monitored and assessed as the proposals moved forward.
- 7.28 Following a question from Councillor Shaw, the Panel were advised that residents would be able to keep their current green bins, however only those who subscribed to the service would have them collected.
- 7.29 Councillor Lowe stated that she was aware of residents who were maintaining verges and disposing of that waste in their green bins, the Panel heard that all Council mowing schedules were on time at present and that Councillors could submit details of such occurrences to the Operations team for further investigation.
- 7.30 The Panel were assured that a robust contract was in place to ensure the current recycling of the waste into compost by Amey would be maintained.
- 7.31 Concern was expressed by Councillor Alban that there may be teething problems should the scheme go ahead and enquired about a Plan B. The Panel were assured that the team would work to optimise the route to ensure best value for money as well as the expected reduction in CO2 emissions, this would be constantly under review to ensure it best fits the needs of residents and the Council.
- 7.32 The Panel were further assured of the capability of the Officers in devising and delivering a scheme which would fit the needs of the Council whilst still delivering for residents and that the report contained all the information needed for Cabinet to make an informed decision.
- 7.33 Following the discussion, the Panel were informed that their comments would be added to the Cabinet report in order for Cabinet to make a decision upon the recommendations and additionally, the Panel request that the Cabinet consider adding the following recommendation to their report;
- g) to agree to complete a review of the impact of the introduction of a household waste subscription service on lower income residents.

1. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

- 1.1 The Panel discussed the Household Garden Waste Subscription Service at its meeting on 6th July 2023.
- 1.2 Councillor Criswell expressed his anger over the report and proposed subscription, giving his reasons as due to;
- the way that the proposal had been received by members of the public;
 - failure to use Overview and Scrutiny to help develop the proposal;
 - introduction of a charge on an existing service;
 - charging residents who are trying to do the right thing by recycling green waste;
 - disproportionately affecting elderly residents who enjoy gardening but may be on a low income;
 - no consultation with residents on the proposed subscription charge;
 - concern that the make up of the joint administration politically is not one that residents had voted for; and
 - that Executive Councillors are not owning the proposed subscription introduction and suggesting that the decision to introduce had been made by Officers.
- 1.3 The Panel were assured that whilst the proposed fee of £57.50 had been modelled by Officers, the proposed subscription had been proposed by the Joint Administration.
- 1.4 Councillor Gardener observed that the report and Executive Councillors had highlighted that the fee was being introduced for those who used the service and enquired if that meant that residents could request refunds for those services which their Council Tax pays for but that they do not use. The Panel heard that the Joint Administration were aware that this would not be a popular decision but that it was necessary to protect the service for those residents who wished to continue to use it. The Panel heard that garden waste collection is a non-statutory collection and that the Council is no longer able to deliver this service free of charge. The proposed changes would also allow local business opportunity and innovation in opening up opportunities for alternative waste collections.
- 1.5 Concern was expressed by Councillor Cawley that the figures within the report were scare tactics and may be working to fund a shortfall that may not happen. He also queried the quoted reduction in CO2 emissions given that many residents may choose to dispose of their garden waste at local recycling centres by private car instead of subscribing to the service.
- 1.6 In response to these questions, the Panel heard that;
- the shortfall figure of £8.3 million was a worst case scenario but that without action there would be a shortfall which would accumulate year on year; and
 - that the predicted CO2 emissions reduction was due to a reduction of refuse vehicles on the road, due to reduced collections and also reduced waste to be reprocessed.

- 1.7 Councillors Cawley and Lowe enquired how it was anticipated that residents would create less green waste should they not have a green bin. The Panel were advised that analysis of other Councils who have undergone the same process, showed that those without a garden waste receptacle generated less green waste. It was further advised that residents also had the option to compost, to use their garden waste as mulch or alternatively to dispose of it at their local recycling centre.
- 1.8 Following an observation from Councillor Cawley that home composting of food waste would generate more methane emissions, the Panel heard that current analysis of waste within each of the three bins currently provided by the Council showed that more food waste was disposed of between the grey and blue bins than the green bin, therefore a change in this behaviour was not anticipated.
- 1.9 Councillor Shaw observed that whilst he believed all Councillors were unhappy with the decision to introduce the subscription service, the reality was that it would be a viable way to address the gap in the finances. Furthermore, the Panel heard that the Section 151 Officer would be unable to sign off the accounts without the introduction of the subscription and the continuation of the service.
- 1.10 The lack of public consultation on the proposed subscription service was queried by Councillors Alban and Lowe who observed that an ongoing consultation on Electrical Vehicle Charging had already been met with a good response from the public. The Panel heard that there is no option to continue the service free of charge therefore a consultation would be immaterial and unreasonable, however it was stressed that public consultation would be held following approval of the recommendations to gauge public opinion on other aspects of the proposed changes. Councillor Alban expressed pride over the good recycling rates achieved by residents in the district to date and shared his concerns that the poorest residents would be disproportionately affected which he claimed was at odds with the ethos of the Joint Administration. The Panel heard that by introducing the proposed subscription service on a non-statutory service, the Council would be able to refocus spending on statutory services. The Panel were further appraised that the report had been brought through the democratic cycle of meetings following concerns expressed at the Council meeting in February 2023.
- 1.11 Following a further enquiry from Councillor Alban regarding the Saturday working detailed within the report, the Panel were advised that this had been budgeted for as overtime and that this work would assist those residents not subscribed to the scheme. The alternative options available under this part of the scheme would form part of the proposed consultation to residents.
- 1.12 It was observed by Councillor Pickering that this was not an easy decision to make and he empathised with those who had had to make the decision, and enquired whether there was potential to offer assistance for those who are in receipt of Council Tax Support.

1.13 Councillors Harvey and Hunt expressed concerns over the impact of the proposed subscription to poorer residents and enquired around alternative payment options aside from annual payments. The Panel heard that the proposal would be to collect the annual fee during the annual break in Council Tax payment collections but that further work would be undertaken to investigate alternative payment options. Councillor Hunt also observed that he had seen press reports stating that the Council was in a good financial position, however the Panel heard that there were not sufficient reserves to cover the projected deficit without cuts to statutory services if this service were to continue without a subscription charge.

1.14 Councillor Hunt proposed to add an additional recommendation to the Cabinet report, this recommendation was seconded by Councillor Harvey and the Panel voted in favour of forwarding the proposed recommendation to Cabinet.

g) to agree to complete a review of the impact of the introduction of a household waste subscription service on lower income residents.

7.15 Councillor Bywater stated that he could not support the proposal and shared his comments and concerns on the proposals within the report including;

- observation that the budget deficit had been present for the past 12 years therefore was not a new issue;
- residents are struggling financially at this time, therefore unreasonable to put further strain on household budgets;
- proposed subscription service undermines the Council's commitment to protect it's residents and to support them in combating Climate Change;
- affecting residents without transport;
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- 1.21 Following a further comment from Councillor Corney on what alternative options had been considered, the Panel heard that the alternatives considered had not made the necessary financial impacts required, therefore the proposal within the report had been put forward. The Panel were further advised that despite this being an unpopular proposal, no viable alternatives had been proposed.
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- although Council Tax may be seen as regressive, nothing is more aggressive than a flat rate fee applied across the district;
 - he felt the member briefing had been more to gauge reaction and how Councillors would support the proposal to their residents despite being prior to the report being available;
 - the language of the report gave conflicting implications – namely that the assumed subscription fees generated would be more than the cost to run the service, therefore it was suggested that they would be subsidising other services;
 - the Council Tax comparison table would benefit from the addition of which Councils current charge for their Garden Waste service;

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- the assumptions in Table 3 do not stand up to scrutiny due to conflicting detail;
- there was not enough rigour in the financial modelling;
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h) to pause progress for 12 months to take time to take advantage of detailed reports and financial implications before bringing the scheme back into the democratic cycle.

However, this motion was not supported by the Panel.

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7.26 Councillor Martin expressed his opinion that there were compelling reasons why the report should be looked at again and again questioned whether the local recycling centres would be able to cope with the demand. He felt that the report had a lot of detail missing and that it was hard to scrutinise the detail due to its absence.

- 7.27 The Panel heard, in response to further questions from Councillors Gardener and Pickering, that an impact assessment had been done to cover the anticipated impact on the local recycling centres and that this would be monitored and assessed as the proposals moved forward.
- 7.28 Following a question from Councillor Shaw, the Panel were advised that residents would be able to keep their current green bins, however only those who subscribed to the service would have them collected.
- 7.29 Councillor Lowe stated that she was aware of residents who were maintaining verges and disposing of that waste in their green bins, the Panel heard that all Council mowing schedules were on time at present and that Councillors could submit details of such occurrences to the Operations team for further investigation.
- 7.30 The Panel were assured that a robust contract was in place to ensure the current recycling of the waste into compost by Amey would be maintained.
- 7.31 Concern was expressed by Councillor Alban that there may be teething problems should the scheme go ahead and enquired about a Plan B. The Panel were assured that the team would work to optimise the route to ensure best value for money as well as the expected reduction in CO2 emissions, this would be constantly under review to ensure it best fits the needs of residents and the Council.
- 7.32 The Panel were further assured of the capability of the Officers in devising and delivering a scheme which would fit the needs of the Council whilst still delivering for residents and that the report contained all the information needed for Cabinet to make an informed decision.
- 7.33 Following the discussion, the Panel were informed that their comments would be added to the Cabinet report in order for Cabinet to make a decision upon the recommendations and additionally, the Panel request that the Cabinet consider adding the following recommendation to their report;
- g) to agree to complete a review of the impact of the introduction of a household waste subscription service on lower income residents.

Cabinet Meeting 18th July 2023

Household Garden Waste Subscription Service Minutes

Consideration was given to a report by the General Manager for Operations (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on the Household Garden Waste Subscription Service.

The Executive Councillor for Corporate and Shared Services referred to comments received from members of the public and also the comments raised by the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Panel at their meeting on 6th July 2023. It was acknowledged that, whilst not a popular decision, the planned introduction of the subscription service would protect the garden waste service for residents across the district.

The Cabinet heard that through the introduction of the subscription service, the continuation of the garden waste service would be possible, and due to the resulting balanced budget, focus could be directed to helping those residents most in need with specific mention being made of the forthcoming review of the Council Tax Support Scheme.

The Executive Councillor for Finance and Resources observed that in hindsight, had increases been made to Council Tax over previous years, the cost of continuing the garden waste collection free of charge may be feasible, however these increases had not been implemented, therefore the introduction of the subscription charge would be the only way to continue the service.

In discussing the views of Overview and Scrutiny and residents in detail, the following points were covered;

- that there is a need to generate income and operate efficiently as a Council, therefore the introduction of the subscription fee for this non-statutory service would allow for the continuation of the service. It was also noted that over 50% of Councils within the Eastern region already charge residents for garden waste collections;
- that garden waste collections are a non statutory service, there is no legal obligation to collect garden waste, however the proposed subscription fee would make the service self-sufficient;
- reference was made to a review of the service in the budget principles as discussed at a meeting of the Full Council in December 2022;
- that a consultation had not been carried out due to the unviable continuation of this non statutory service free of charge, however consultations were planned to discuss the implementation and alternative waste management options with residents;
- that a reduction in CO₂ was expected due to reduced collection rounds, resulting in a reduction in required collection vehicles and reduction in journey time for the collections;

- that work will be undertaken to encourage a behavioural change in residents as analysis of grey bins shows their contents currently include 42% of organic matter;
- that residents would be able to share green bins with their neighbours and it would be up to residents to make their own arrangements to this effect;
- that alternative collection options had been considered, the proposed subscription service will protect frontline services whilst retaining the non statutory green waste collections;
- that an increase in fly-tipping had been considered, however analysis of neighbouring authorities who had already introduced a subscription fee showed no increase to this problem, it was also noted that the Council has an effective enforcement team with the technology to support them;
- that concerns over the impact on local household recycling centres were understandable and that the situation would be monitored; and
- that despite being asked, no member of Overview and Scrutiny had been able to suggest a valid alternative to the introduction of the subscription service.

It was observed by the Executive Councillor for Jobs, Economy and Housing that the joint administration had inherited a budget with an £8 million shortfall and that the previous administration had not specified how they would have addressed this in the Medium Term Financial Strategy. It was also observed that the previous administration had made reference to continuing free of charge garden waste collections in their manifesto prior to 2022 but from 2022 had referenced a continuation of the collection. In addition to this, it was again noted that whilst this was not a decision any Councillor wished to make, it was the most practicable for the continuation of the service.

The Executive Councillor for Climate and Environment stated that whilst this was the most difficult decision to face the joint administration to date, the alternatives considered were not viable.

The Cabinet's attention was brought to an additional recommendation as proposed by Overview and Scrutiny;

to agree to complete a review of the impact of the introduction of a household waste subscription service on lower income residents.

it was clarified that an equality impact assessment would address these concerns. The Executive Councillor for Corporate and Shared Services proposed the inclusion of this recommendation within the report, this was seconded by the Executive Councillor for Finance and Resources, following which, the Cabinet agreed unanimously to add the recommendation to the report.

Whereupon, the Cabinet has

RESOLVED

- a) to note the risks associated with the proposal, both financially and reputationally, that have been highlighted within the report that may arise through emerging national waste policies and guidance, and changes to Cambridgeshire County Council's Waste Private Finance Initiative (PFI)

Contract which require approval from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA);

- b)** to agree to the introduction of a household garden waste subscription service from 1st April 2024, as set out within the service terms and conditions attached as Appendix 2 of this report;
- c)** to agree to changes to the Waste Collection Policies, relating to the introduction of the chargeable subscription household garden waste service as set out in Appendix 2 of this report;
- d)** to agree that for 2024/25 the annual collection charge be set at £57.50 per first bin and authorise the Executive Councillor for Corporate and Shared Services in consultation with the Managing Director to review and confirm the currently proposed £30 for each additional bin to the maximum of 4 bins;
- e)** to agree to use the revenue generated by the chargeable subscription household garden waste service to fund the start-up project costs including service redesign, temporary staff resource, website redesign and implementation of associated IT systems (as set out in the financial model Table 3);
- f)** to agree that the existing non-chargeable household garden waste collection service will cease from 31 March 2024. Arrangements will be made during Q2 FY 2024/25 to collect any bins from households that do not wish to subscribe and wish to return them;
- g)** to agree to implement a robust communications campaign and incentivisation scheme to encourage subscription sign-ups and promote behaviour change for our residents in waste minimisation; and
- h)** to agree to complete a review of the impact of the introduction of a household waste subscription service on lower income residents.

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Appendix 4 - Data used to support the environmental and climate impacts and the impacts on the current waste collection streams

Concerns raised, Lack of evidence available to Overview and Scrutiny Panel Members regarding full data, assumptions and calculations supporting the financial and environmental claims.

Environmental Claim

When assessing the environmental impacts, a number of factors were identified that would be affected by the proposed change in service. Of the range of environmental factors considered eg: air quality, water quality, biodiversity, noise, land usage, the factor with the most impact in terms of severity, duration and likelihood was identified as air quality.

As previously presented to Overview and Scrutiny on the 6 July 2023

The process used to estimate the potential carbon savings from the introduction of a fully subscription garden collection service was based on the following rational, data and carbon modelling system.

To calculate the savings, we used the Carbon Waste and Resources Metric (Carbon Warm), to estimate a potential reduction in CO2e of 369.16 tonnes through the entire lifecycle of collection and processing.

The Carbon Waste and Resources Metric (Carbon WARM) has been developed by the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) on request by DEFRA to allow monitoring and evaluation of the impacts of the Resources and Waste Strategy in terms of its Greenhouse Gas emissions impact, measured as carbon dioxide equivalent (CO2e).

Carbon WARM is also suitable for use by local authorities, waste management companies and other organisations looking to understand the Greenhouse Gas impacts of their waste management decisions.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1123468/Statistics_on_carbon_emissions_Waste_Households_England_v8_2018.pdf

table 1-Tonnage data used to estimate carbon savings.

	Baseline garden waste yield pre-service changes (3 yrs. average)	Total tonnage captured post service change (including through refuse waste)	Potential garden yield post service change, (excluding through refuse waste) (based on 60-65% capture rate)	Potential garden waste diverted to residual in tonnes	Potential garden waste removed from the waste stream through either behaviour or change of home composting
Tonnage Estimates	21,703	14,866.59	14,106.95	759.64	6836.41
Carbon metric applied	54kg per/ton	54kg/ton	54kg/ton	54kg/ton	54kg/ton
t.co2e values	1171.69	802.79	761.77	41.02	

Potential t.co2e reduction after service changes					369.16
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Rational

Table 1 shows the estimated tonnages of garden waste captured through the garden waste stream currently and what the impact on tonnages may look like after implementing the service changes. It also shows the Carbon Warm metric that has been applied to calculate the emissions values through the life cycle of collecting and onward processing using tables from the carbon modelling data set.

The factors shown in this table have been updated to include some revised data and so may not match those in the original Carbon WARM report.

kg.CO₂e / tonne

	Closed loop recycling	Open Loop recycling	Anaerobic digestion	Composting	Energy from Waste	Landfill
Food	0	0	-78	6	-37	627
Garden	0	0	-78	72	-77	579
Food and garden	0	0	-78	54	-70	592
Paper	-129	0	0	0	-214	1,042
Cardboard	-96	0	0	0	-219	1,042
Paper and board	-104	0	0	0	-218	1,042
Steel	-1,062	0	0	0	19	9
Aluminium	-7,469	0	0	0	24	9
Mixed (cans)	-3,368	0	0	0	21	9
Glass	-326	33	0	0	8	9
Textiles	-14,315	0	0	0	438	445
PET	-654	205	0	0	1,579	9
HDPE	-485	205	0	0	2,241	9
Dense plastics	-590	205	0	0	1,691	9
Film	-532	205	0	0	1,475	9
Wood	-477	0	0	0	-268	828
Copper	-6,022	0	0	0	19	9
OTHER Waste & Recycling	-512	33	0	0	229	419

(Extract from Carbon Warm modelling)

It is worth noting that the garden waste collection tonnages are linked to the climate and growing season and are prone to fluctuations from year to year, current baseline tonnages have been calculated using a three-year average of current known tonnage data. Estimated capture rates are based on learning from Local Authorities that have implemented garden collection charges, and also

from a high-level waste collection modelling report conducted by Local Partnerships as part of a wider piece of work that was conducted in 2020, which looked at a variety of waste collections models and disposal routes. It is estimated that approx. 60%-65% of current garden waste tonnage could continue to be captured through the new scheme, with potentially up to 10% entering the residual waste stream, and the remaining material being removed from the waste stream all together through home composting and behaviour change.

To help gauge the validity of the assumptions on capture rates, behaviour change etc., data was also used from a neighbouring authority showing the impact before and after they introduced a garden waste subscription service in 2016, although it should be noted that localised differences may impact estimates.

Data summary of neighbouring authority

- Reduction of 5,261 tonnes of green waste from kerbside collections (capture rate of 56%)
- an increase of 502 tonnes of green waste at HRCs (no available data to directly attribute to charging for garden waste collections)
- an increase of 2,098 tonnes of residual waste from kerbside
- with the remaining 2,661 tonnes of waste disappearing from the system (e.g., home composting, behaviour change etc) (22%)

(Figures provided by Cambridgeshire County Council)

Concerns raised Impacts on the grey bin waste; and impacts on additional use of recycling centres.

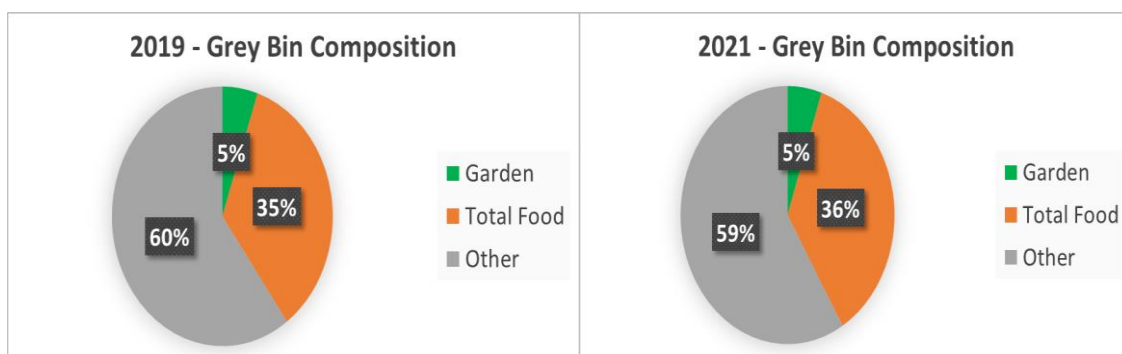
Impacts on grey bin waste.

In 2019, and 2021 (2020 was excluded due to covid lockdown restrictions) the Cambridgeshire Waste Partnership (Recap) commission an independent specialist company to conduct a waste analysis on the composition of the waste materials entering the kerbside collection system. The purpose of this analysis is to help shape the future waste collection services and waste minimisation strategies.

Analysis of the grey bin (refuse)

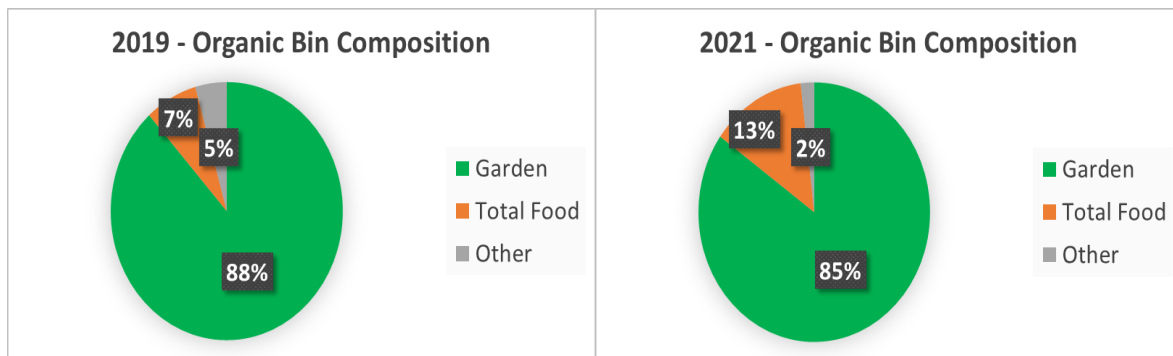
In 2019, around 40% of the grey bin was organic waste that should have been collected through the currently free garden waste collection service, of this, 35% was food waste.

In 2021, around 41% of the grey bin was organic material that should have been collected through the currently free garden waste collection service, of this, 36% was food waste.

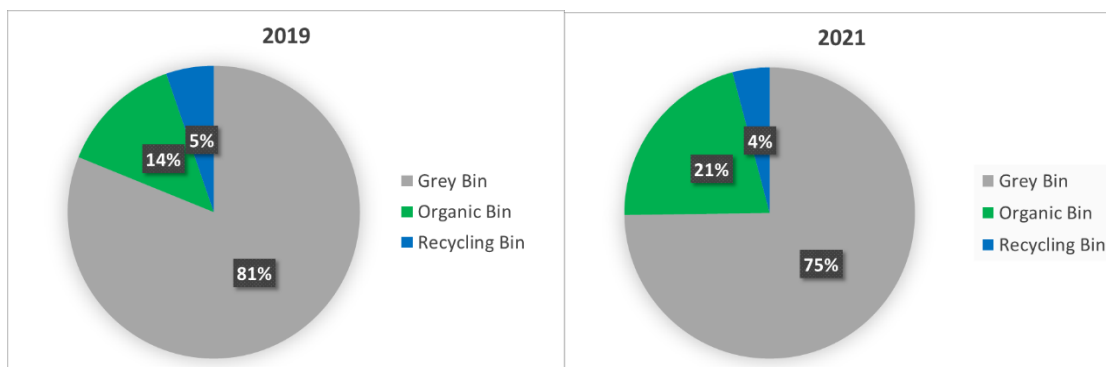


Analysis of the Organic bin (Garden and Food)

In 2019, around 6% of the organic waste bin was food waste, and in 2021, around 13% of the organic waste bin was food waste.



Waste Analysis in 2019 & 2021 showed the total food waste tonnage we collected through all waste streams was captured predominantly through the grey bin and not the organic bin provided to residents.



The data also showed that the food waste being collected, around 70% was deemed avoidable and could/should have been eaten. This is also supported by WRAP, <https://wrap.org.uk/taking-action/citizen-behaviour-change/love-food-hate-waste>

Currently, 70% of the food that is wasted in the UK is wasted by citizens in their own homes. That's 4.5 million tonnes of food being thrown away every year that could have been eaten.

The data shows the predominant disposal route of food waste is through the grey bin collections and not the free organic waste collection currently operating, which equates to around 41% of the grey bin composition. Interestingly, the waste composition analysis also shows that two neighbouring authorities, both of which charge for garden waste, with one also offering a separate food waste collection, have a grey bin organic composition of 46%, around 5% higher than HDCs. The data suggests that charging for garden waste will not drastically increase food waste or garden waste being diverted into the residual waste stream.

Recycling centre Impacts

There are three Household Recycling Centres in Huntingdonshire, locations are Alconbury, St Neots, and Bluntisham. Concerns have been raised that the service changes will increase costs and operational pressure on Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) who are responsible for the operation

of these sites. Considerations have been given and the data gathered suggest there is significant capacity in the current infrastructure to accommodate an increases in footfall and additional material as garden tonnages are down by around 4,000 tonnes against 2019 figures, however, it is extremely difficult to predict uplift in footfall at any one specific site, and we will continue to work closely with CCC to monitor the sites within Huntingdonshire.

Table 2. Showing tonnages being collected and processed by all site

HRC Green	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23
April	909	0	414	523
May	1,051	517	379	610
June	1,161	581	564	597
July	1,165	584	697	485
August	1,263	510	672	518
September	1,061	640	613	614
October	676	456	549	561
November	529	433	391	397
December	306	145	226	153
January	306	243	251	227
February	296	201	273	358
March	657	491	505	365
Total tonnage	9,379	4,801	5,534	5,408

Fly Tipping

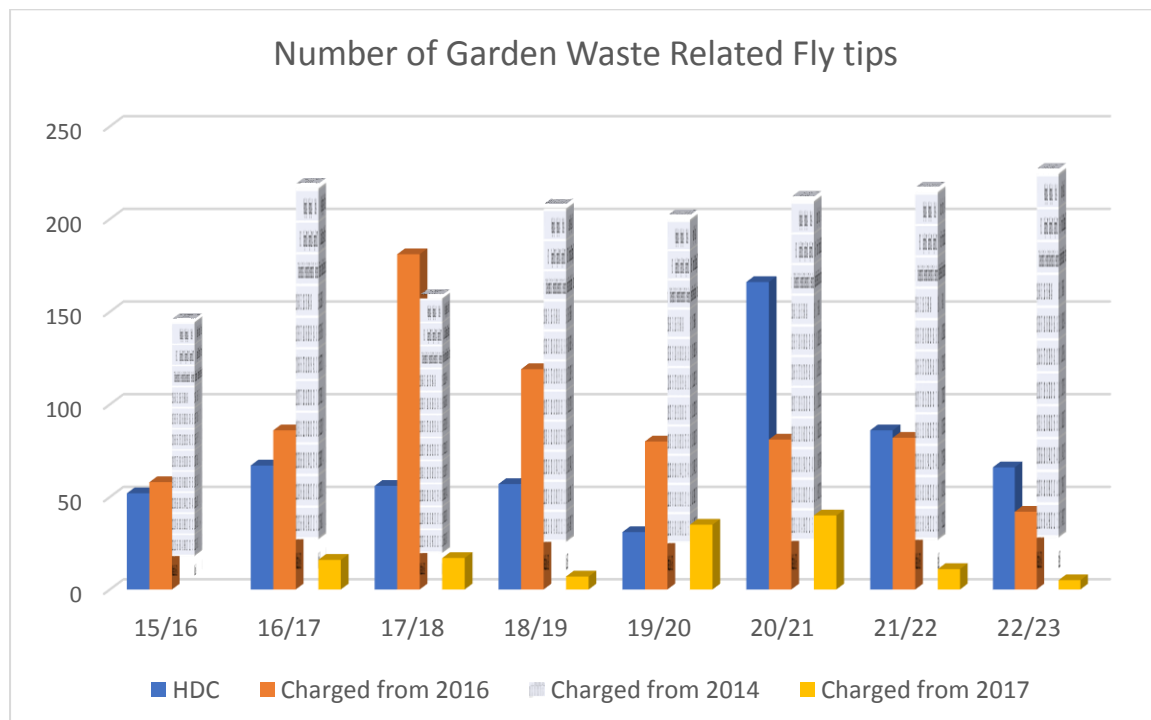
Fly tipping is complex with many contributing factors. We have conducted benchmarking with other councils who charge for the collection of garden waste. This has shown that there is not a significant increase in fly-tipping when charges are introduced.

For the 2021/22 year, local authorities in England dealt with 1.09 million fly-tipping incidents, a decrease of 4% from the 1.14 million reported in 2020/21. The percentage of fly-tips involving household waste has fallen from 65% to 61% in 2021/22

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/fly-tipping-in-england/fly-tipping-statistics-for-england-2021-to-2022#:~:text=For%20the%202021%2F22%20year,61%25%20in%202021%2F22>

	HDC		Neighbouring LA Charged from 2016		Neighbouring LA Charged from 2014		Other LA Charged from 2017	
	Total	Green Incidents	Total	Green Incidents	Total	Green Incidents	Total	Green Incidents
15/16	634	52	1166	58	6984	146		
16/17	692	67	1428	86	8186	219	624	16
17/18	683	56	1775	181	7198	159	461	17
18/19	1072	57	1829	119	7282	208	323	7
19/20	542	31	1522	80	6820	202	567	35
20/21	2350	166	1300	81	9744	212	679	40
21/22	1247	86	1062	82	8981	217	417	11
22/23	1152	66	608	42	9943	227	122	5

WasteDataFlow - DEFRA



WRAP's study around Fly tipping and HWRC's charging suggests that

- Residual waste collection frequency does not have a significant association with increased fly tipping

- The only variables that do have a significant association with fly tipping are:
 - Deprivation – fly tipping rates increase with deprivation levels
 - Urban-Rural Classification – Major Conurbation have higher fly tipping rates than others

The research found no evidence of an association between fly tipping and charging at HWRC's
WRAP - The relationship between fly-tipping rates and HWRC charging – June 2021

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Appendix 5 – Financing Modelling & Assumptions

Income & Expenditure Statement Proposed Garden Waste Subscription, MTFS basis

	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
Income:				
1st chargeable bin ^[1]	(1,380,000)	(1,840,000)	(2,300,000)	(2,300,000)
2nd chargeable bin ^[2]	(86,400)	(86,400)	(86,400)	(86,400)
Chargeable income	(1,466,400)	(1,926,400)	(2,386,400)	(2,386,400)
Remove existing MTFS second bin assumption ^[3]	205,000	205,000	205,000	205,000
Total Income	(1,261,400)	(1,721,400)	(2,181,400)	(2,181,400)
Expenditure:				
Staff cost savings ^[4]	(318,580)	(238,935)	(159,290)	(159,290)
Fuel cost savings ^[5]	(81,089)	(60,816)	(40,544)	(40,544)
Call centre staff ^[6]	35,000	35,000	35,000	35,000
Annual billing ^[7]	20,000	30,000	40,000	40,000
Transaction fees, card payment ^[8]	27,600	36,800	46,000	46,000
Administration - staff ^[9]	31,519	31,519	31,519	31,519
Annual renewals ^[10]	28,320	37,760	47,200	47,200
Community Initiatives ^[11]	200,000	200,000	200,000	200,000
Total Expenditure	(57,230)	71,328	199,885	199,885
Net (Surplus)/deficit	(1,318,630)	(1,650,072)	(1,981,515)	(1,981,515)
Implementation costs ^[12]	849,601	0	0	0
Net adjustment to prior year MTFS - (benefit)/adverse	(469,029)	(1,650,072)	(1,981,515)	(1,981,515)
Total all years - (benefit)/adverse	(6,082,133)			

The Income and Expenditure statement has been prepared as part of the 2023/24 Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and therefore considers the impact to the previous year's MTFS should the Garden Waste subscription (GWS) service be implemented. The below notes detail the basis for each of the figures in the Income and Expenditure statement.

NB. The scheme is anticipated to be introduced with effect from year 2 of the 2023/24 MTFS. Any references below to "year" refers to the GWS service, not the MTFS.

Notes:

[1] Income for 1st Chargeable Bin.

It is assumed only a portion of Huntingdonshire's household will opt in GWS. Using analysis from other districts that have already implemented GWS, the take up is estimated to be:

Year 1	30%
Year 2	40%
Year 3	50%
Year 4	50%

The basis of charging is that each household will be charged £57.50 for its first bin. Applying this, and the above percentages to the number of households in Huntingdonshire (80,000) where a green bin is currently collected gives the following income profile:

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Subscription uptake	30%	40%	50%	50%
Number of bins subscribed	24,000	32,000	40,000	40,000
Income generated	£1,380,000	£1,840,000	£2,300,000	£2,300,000

[2] Income for additional chargeable bins.

It is anticipated there will still be a demand for additional garden bins but that some households will reconsider their need for one. The financial business case assumes demand for additional bins will decrease to 3.6% of households, and that the charge for second bins will drop to £30/bin. This gives a consistent income of £86,400 per annum. As with initial green bins, there is a likelihood additional bin take up will increase over the period, but we have opted to take a prudent stance on this revenue and to maintain it at a consistent level.

[3] Remove MTFS existing second bin income assumption.

As the financial business case is modelling the impact against the previous MTFS, any assumptions relating to previous income modelling needs to be removed to eliminate revenue double counting. This row in the Income and Expenditure statement eliminates the previous MTFS income assumption.

[4] Staff cost savings

If fewer garden waste bins are being collected, fewer collection runs are required. Staff savings are based upon the following reduction in weekly collection runs

Year 1	4 runs
Year 2	3 runs
Year 3	2 runs
Year 4	2 runs

Each run removed will generate staff savings as follows:

Driver x1	£28,250
Loader x2	£51,395
Total	£79,645

Combining these figures gives the following annual savings:

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Bins collections removed	4	3	2	2
Staff savings	£318,580	£238,935	£159,290	£159,290

It should be noted that whilst savings have been calculated using permanent staff costs, the savings are planned to be achieved through agency staff reductions and natural wastage.

[5] Fuel cost savings

The basis for fuel cost savings is the same as staff cost savings; fewer bin collections require fewer bin runs. Diesel costs in the previous MTFS for green bin collection totalled £141,905 for 7 collection rounds, an average cost of £20,272 per round.

Using these figures, indicative savings are indicated:

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Bins collections removed	4	3	2	2
Staff savings	£81,088	£60,816	£40,544	£40,544

These indicative savings assume a constant fuel value and do not consider additional savings attributable to increases in the cost of fuel per litre.

[6] Cost of additional Call Centre staff

Introducing a new chargeable service will attract additional activity through the Call Centre. Through engagement with call centre management, we have built our costings on the assumption 10% of effected households will call the Customer Services team. A fully inclusive cost of £35,000 per annum has been built into the financial assumptions to cover this.

[7] Annual billing costs

Each year there will need to be an annual billing process, updating collection round systems, generating invoices and maintaining the direct debit information. The Waste service has estimated these costs as follows:

Year 1	£20,000
Year 2	£30,000
Year 3	£40,000
Year 4	£40,000

[8] Transaction card payment fees

Any income collected via payment cards will attract a payment processing fee from the card merchant. Whilst not all payments will be made via a payment card, we have no way of knowing what proportion will be via direct debit and what will be via a payment card. We have therefore assumed a worst case scenario and planned for 2% transactions card payment fee for all first bin payments (transactions fees for second bins, an existing charge will already be included in the previous MTFS):

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Income collected	£1,380,000	£1,840,000	£2,300,000	£2,300,000
Transaction fee (2%)	£27,600	£36,800	£46,000	£46,000

[9] Administration staff costs:

The introduction of a subscription service will generate additional administrative work. There is insufficient capacity in the existing team to cover this, therefore provision has been made in the MTFS for an additional Grade D administrator, the full cost of which (including employer oncosts) is £31,519 per annum.

[10] Annual Renewals

This covers the costs of producing and distributing the labels for bins, to identify which bins are subscribed to the service and should be collected. Costs have been budgeted on the basis of £0.50 per label and £0.68 per bin postage. Costs are only calculated for first bin subscriptions as second bin costs are already included in the previous MTFS:

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Volume	24,000	32,000	40,000	40,000
Sticker production	£12,000	£16,000	£20,000	£20,000
Postage	£16,320	£21,760	£27,200	£27,200

[11] Community initiatives

An allowance has been made in each year of the MTFS for expenditure for community initiatives including but not limited to Saturday freighters, subsidised composting kits, local council allocation of garden bins for discretionary distribution. This has been set at £200,000 per annum

[12] Implementation costs

There are some "one-off" costs that will be incurred as part of the subscription introduction and transition e.g., changes that need to be made to existing processes and systems which need planning and implementation, communication to residents helping them either subscribe to the service, or to answer questions they may be.

Costs have been included in the MTFS for:

- i. Billing system changes – one off updates to systems to accommodate the change to a subscription service,

Yotta	£30,000
IEG	£30,000
Resource	<u>£40,000</u>
Total	<u>£100,000</u>

- ii. Removal of bins – any bins which are not subscribed into the service will need collecting and preparing for re-use - £250,000
- iii. Staff consultation costs, linked to rota changes or changes to ways of working, 6 months' HR resource, £22,500
- iv. Communication of changes to residents £125,000
- v. Change management resource, 15 months (9 months pre implementation, 6 months post implementation) £162,500
- vi. Call Centre resource, 1 x CS advisor for 12 months, 4 x CS advisors for 3 months £63,037
- vii. Provision for change £126,564

Impact of Delaying Garden Waste Subscription by One Year:

Table 5	Council Funding Statement Budget (2023/24) and MTFS						
	2022/23		2023/24	Medium Term Financial Strategy			
	Budget	Forecast (September)	Budget	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Net Expenditure	21,514	22,045	24,113	22,474	20,987	21,134	21,599
Contribution to/(from) Earmarked Reserves:	-	(114)	187	253	253	253	253
Contribution to/(from) General Reserves	249	127	(0)	2,774	1,469	729	(309)
Budget Requirement	21,763	22,058	24,299	25,501	22,709	22,116	21,543
Impact of delaying GWS by 12 months:							
Net Expenditure in existing MTFS			24,113	22,474	20,987	21,134	21,599
Remove current GWS assumptions in MTFS:							
- Implementation costs				(850)	-	-	-
- Ongoing activity				1,319	1,650	1,982	1,982
<u>New GWS assumptions:</u>							
- Ongoing activity					(1,319)	(1,650)	(1,982)
- Implementation costs							
Billing system changes			50		100		
Removal of old bins					250		
Staff consultation					23		
Communication of changes to residents					125		
Change management			33		163		
Call centre resources					63		
Provision for change					127		
Total Implementation costs			83	-	850	-	-
Adjusted Net Expenditure if GWS delayed			24,196	22,943	22,168	21,465	21,599
Net Expenditure per MTFS			24,113	22,474	20,987	21,134	21,599
Movement - (favourable)/Adverse			83	469	1,181	331	-
Total, all years			2,064				

Sensitivity analysis

Assumptions		Round	Salary	NI (ers)	Pens (ers)	Total
Number of residents	80,000	Driver Grade D	22,380	1,999	3,872	28,250
Current number of runs	7	Loader Grade C	20,451	1,708	3,538	25,697
Truck staffing/run	£79,645	Loader Grade C	20,451	1,708	3,538	25,697
Fuel	£141,905	Total	63,282	5,415	10,948	79,645

Collections per run	11,429	Year 1
Staffing per run	£79,645	Year 2
Fuel per run	£20,272	Year 3 & 4
Revenue per bin	£57.50	

No account taken of second bin collections, impact is likely to minimal

Sensitivity:

	5%	10%	15%	20%	25%	30%	35%	40%	45%	50%	55%	60%	65%	70%	75%
Percentage take up	5%	10%	15%	20%	25%	30%	35%	40%	45%	50%	55%	60%	65%	70%	75%
Volume of collections	4,000	8,000	12,000	16,000	20,000	24,000	28,000	32,000	36,000	40,000	44,000	48,000	52,000	56,000	60,000
Number of run required	1	1	2	2	2	3	3	3	4	4	4	5	5	5	6
Annual revenue (£)	(230,000)	(460,000)	(690,000)	(920,000)	(1,150,000)	(1,380,000)	(1,610,000)	(1,840,000)	(2,070,000)	(2,300,000)	(2,530,000)	(2,760,000)	(2,990,000)	(3,220,000)	(3,450,000)
Annual cost of collection (£)	99,917	99,917	199,834	199,834	199,834	299,752	299,752	299,752	399,669	399,669	399,669	499,586	499,586	499,586	599,503
Transaction fees (£)	(4,600)	(9,200)	(13,800)	(18,400)	(23,000)	(27,600)	(32,200)	(36,800)	(41,400)	(46,000)	(50,600)	(55,200)	(59,800)	(64,400)	(69,000)
(Surplus)/Deficit (£)	(134,683)	(369,283)	(503,966)	(738,566)	(973,166)	(1,107,848)	(1,342,448)	(1,577,048)	(1,711,731)	(1,946,331)	(2,180,931)	(2,315,614)	(2,550,214)	(2,784,814)	(2,919,497)
Movement from Year 1 assumption (£)	973,166	738,566	603,883	369,283	134,683	0	(234,600)	(469,200)	(603,883)	(838,483)	(1,073,083)	(1,207,766)	(1,442,366)	(1,676,966)	(1,811,648)
Staffing impacts - (reduction)/increase in comparison to Year 1	(6)	(6)	(3)	(3)	(3)	0	0	0	3	3	3	6	6	6	9

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Huntingdonshire District Council Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

Service area	Operations
Date of assessment	10/07/2023
Name of policy/service to be assessed	Garden Waste Subscription Service
Is this a new or existing policy/service?	New service offering for a household garden waste subscription service where collection of all garden waste will be a chargeable service. This is a change from the existing service for households where the first garden bin is provided at no cost and additional garden bins can be requested at a charge of £55 per annum.
Name of manager responsible for new or amended policy/service	Andy Rogan, Heidi Field
Names of people conducting the assessment	Oana Hughineata, Liz Smith
Step 1 – Description of new or amended policy/service	
Describe the aims; objectives and purpose of the new or amended policy/service (include how it fits in to wider aims or strategic objectives).	<p>The change in policy is to propose the introduction of a household garden waste subscription service, which would replace the current non-chargeable collection service from April 2024. The proposal aims to ensure that the garden waste service in Huntingdonshire is self-funding and sustainable in line with the council's carbon reduction targets of net zero by 2040.</p> <p>The Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Assess the potential impact of the service on different equality groups. . Identify any potential barriers or disadvantages faced by specific groups. . Ensure that the service is designed and delivered in a manner that promotes equality, inclusivity and accessibility for all residents. <p>The EIA supports the strategic objective of delivering the garden waste subscription service in an equitable manner. It aims to eliminate any unjustified or disproportionate barriers that may hinder certain groups from accessing the service, ensuring equal opportunities for all residents.</p>
The Equality Act 2010 requires the Council to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations, the Council also needs to demonstrate its compliance with the Equality Duty. The Council therefore needs to understand how its	

Huntingdonshire District Council Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

decisions and activities impact on different people. An Equality Impact Assessment is the current method by which the Council can assess and keep a record of the impact of new or amended strategies, policies, functions or services.

The council retains these duties even when outsourcing services or providing shared services.

Definition of Adverse Impact - occurs when a decision, practice, or Policy has a disproportionately negative effect on a protected group. Adverse Impact may be unintentional.

Are there any (existing) equality objectives of the new/amended policy/service

To ensure that the household garden waste subscription service policy objectives are designed to promote equality, diversity, and inclusion within the implementation process and does not disproportionately impact any equality group.

Who is intended to benefit from the new/amended policy/service and in what way?

All residents with a private garden

What are the intended outcomes of this new/amended policy/service?

Garden Waste Subscription Service policy outcome is to address the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) imperative by offering residents who use the service to fund it through an annual subscription. Therefore, we can ensure that the service remains available to those residents who wish to subscribe and promote behaviour change for our residents in waste minimisation.

Step 2 – Data

What baseline **quantitative data (statistics)** do you have about the function relating to equalities groups (e.g. monitoring data on proportions of service users compared to proportions in the population), relevant to this new/amended policy/service?

[Huntingdonshire Statistics](#)

Office for National Statistics Key Findings:

According to ONS report 2022, Huntingdonshire is the 14th least densely populated of the East of England's 45 local authority areas as of 2021. The 2021 Census estimates that there were 180,800 usual residents living in Huntingdonshire in March 2021. The first release of data provides a breakdown of this into 5-year age groups. The number of people aged 15-64 also increased by 2% to 113,700 and the number of people aged 65 or over increased by 33% to 36,500 at March 2021. The proportion for 2021 estimates of Huntingdonshire's population in each age band, by sex, against the 2011 shows a decline in age ranges numbers (e.g 15-24, 40-49) but increases in others (e.g., 5-9, 25-39). All age groups over fifty have seen an

Huntingdonshire District Council Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

increase in both males and females over the ten years from the previous Census.

The proportion of residents who live in a house or bungalow is 88%, with 11.2% living in a flat, maisonette or apartment and less than 1% in a caravan or boat. Those not living in a house or bungalow may not have a garden.

The proportion of residents who live in the social housing rented accommodation sector is 13%.

According to the latest available data, as of 2023, the number of households utilising the garden waste collection service in Huntingdonshire stood at 78,000 properties an estimation of 91% who actively participate.

Cambridgeshire Insights:

- Huntingdonshire is ranked as the 3rd most deprived of the five districts across Cambridgeshire for overall Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD Score)
- The Barrier to Housing and Services is domain ranks the lowest (most deprived) out of the domains in Huntingdonshire when ranked against all other local authorities nationally (117/317).
- The Income domain is ranked as the highest (least deprived) in the Local Authority rankings (250/317), closely followed by the Employment (245/317) and Health & Disability domain (242/317).
- Huntingdonshire has 2 LSOAs in the 20% most relatively deprived nationally (H 008A in Huntingdon West and H 008B in Huntingdon North). These were the same two LSOAs that were also in the 20% most relatively deprived nationally in 2015
- There is very little difference between the deprivation domain scores when comparing the urban and rural classified LSOAs in Huntingdonshire.
- Within Huntingdonshire, income deprivation affecting older people (IDAOP) is more prevalent than that with children (IDACI), but only by one decile rank (IDAOP = 8, IDACI = 7 where 1 is the most deprived).
- 25 LSOAs have become more relatively deprived by 1 decile since 2015, whilst 9 LSOAs in Huntingdonshire have become less relatively deprived by 1 decile nationally.

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What **qualitative data (opinions etc)** do you have on different groups (e.g. comments from previous consumer satisfaction surveys/consultation, feedback exercises, or evidence from other authorities undertaking similar work), relevant to this new/amended policy/service?

The analysis focuses on gathering insights from different councils such as Winchester, Watford, North Herts, East Herts, Hartford, Basingstoke, Eastleigh, Three Rivers who have experienced the introduction of fees for garden waste disposal. The qualitative data provides valuable perspectives on the impact of this policy change on resident's behaviour, attitudes, and overall satisfaction with the service.

Themes and Findings:

Awareness and understanding; From the data received, many participants expressed a lack of awareness regarding the introduction of charges for garden waste collection, indicating inadequate communication from local authorities. Additionally, confusion has been found within the residents regarding collection schedule, payment methods, and acceptable types of garden waste.

Changes in Behaviour: A considerable number of residents reported reducing their waste production or finding separate ways to dispose it such as composting or communal composting facilities. On the other hand, several residents expressed frustration about having to pay for a service they previously received for free.

Financial impact: Residents expressed concerns about financial burden of the new chargeable service.

The findings suggest a need for improved communication strategies to ensure residents are well-informed about policy changes. Furthermore, addressing concerns related to service quality, efficiency, and customer support is crucial for maintaining resident satisfaction. The data also highlights the importance of considering the environmental implications and exploring community-driven initiatives to promote sustainable garden waste management.

Regarding discounts scheme offered by different councils those mentioned above responded with some information provided by email.

- Fewer than 10% of Local Authorities who charge for garden waste collection services also offer a discount/exemption scheme for low-income households

Huntingdonshire District Council Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

- Discounts were wildly different and ranging from £5 to 50%
- Generally, discount was made for those residents on Council Tax or housing Benefit.
 - With few exceptions, the Local Authorities did not perform any authentication / validation with regards to discount expect format validation within the form.
 - Local Authorities in this situation had not considered re-validation at the point of renewal
 - Where Local Authorities did perform validation, it completely broke the digital process turning the automation into manual laborious administration and / or contact that was not scalable.
 - No Local Authorities had the capacity to react if a bin was no longer paid for due to the administrative and operational costs associated with removing stickers or bins from routes. It was deemed as simply not worth the effort.
 - DD take up where there was no incentive hit around 50% but this was a gradual increase over years 1-3.
 - DD where there was an incentive rapidly increased DD take up and increased the percentage of DD payments to 70-80%
 - Lead time was at least two weeks (the time between a resident paying for the scheme and the service being in place)
 - Uptake across the Local Authorities providing information showed that the distribution of resident sign up was approximately 50/50 across sign up prior to the service offer commencing (i.e. those residents paying for the service prior to the start of the scheme) and those residents who did not sign up to the scheme upfront, but then did sign up to the service during the course of the year.
 - All but one council charged the full amount to a resident signing up part way through a scheme year.
 - Uptake was consistent. i.e. numbers of resident sign up did not increase (generally) year on year except in small numbers. Generally, within 6 months of scheme launch resident sign up had peaked.

- All Councils offering a Direct Debit renewal payment did so via a digital offering.

Over the summer of 2019, the Watford council undertook two engagement exercises to gauge people's current perceptions of waste and recycling services. The engagement channels were an online survey (a more traditional approach) and a chatbot survey, through Facebook messenger. This was borne out by the demographics collected through both engagement exercises.

1. ONLINE SURVEY

IN FIELD: 30 July – 10 September 2019
RESPONSES: 398

2. CHATBOT SURVEY (DEPLOYED THROUGH FACEBOOK MESSENGER)

IN FIELD: 27 August – 6 September 2019
RESPONSES: 547

Age profile of respondents

The online survey received the most responses from those in the 35-44 age range (26%), followed by 45 -54 years at 24% whilst the chatbot survey was in the age group 18-30 years.

Sex of respondents

Unexpectedly, there was a very significant difference in the profile of those answering the online survey – with 75% of respondents coming from women. In contrast, the chatbot survey was much more in line with the profile of the Watford population – with 52% male (slightly high) and 48% female (slightly low).

Ethnicity of respondents

Only the online survey asked regarding people's ethnicity. 79% of respondents were White British, which is a higher percentage than in the population with the next highest category being 'White Other'. The EIA, therefore, needs to take into account what is known of the Watford population (see below) in considering ethnicity impacts as these will not necessarily be picked up through the views shared in the survey.

Health of respondents

Huntingdonshire District Council Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

15% of respondents declared their day-to-day activities are limited by disability / health related issues. Again, this EIA needs to consider what is known of the Watford population (see below) in considering disability related impacts as these will not necessarily be picked up through the views shared in the survey.

Overall, the council believes that the changes will support an increase in recycling across the borough, which is of benefit to everyone given the acknowledged impact on the environment of items such as single use plastics. The introduction of garden waste subscription is a direct response to the financial challenges the council faces and, by charging those who receive the service, protects it for those who want it but also other service areas which the council is responsible for delivering.

The [Consultation and Engagement Strategy Accessibility Guidance](#) may be helpful when thinking about the potential impact of a policy/service on people with different protected characteristics.

Age – this refers to the protected characteristic of age. A person belonging to a particular age (for example 32-year olds) or range of ages (for example 18 to 30-year olds).

Are there concerns that the new policy/service could have a differential impact on individuals with this protected characteristic?

Are there any concerns that the policy/service amendments could have differential impact on individuals with this protected characteristic?

For some services this should include consideration of impact in terms of safeguarding young people.

What evidence do you have for your answer?

Yes

Where people are unable to access the information, via the website or internet due to technological barriers we will support the residents through paper-based communication sent to every household, local media and customer service to provide clear explanations and guidance. Additionally, we will direct them to places such as community groups, libraires or Town and Parish Councils where they can access the information and support. We will consider providing information in various formats such as leaflets, media release to Town and Parish Councils Parish and engaging in outreach activities to reach all age groups effectively

Disability – this refers the protected characteristic of disability. A person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Yes

Key considerations when considering the potential impact on individuals with disabilities are:

Accessibility of the Service: Assisted collections are available to people who cannot take their bins out themselves and there is no other person living

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<p>Are there concerns that the new policy/service could have a differential impact on individuals with this protected characteristic.</p> <p>Are there any concerns that the policy/service amendments could have differential impact on individuals with this protected characteristic?</p> <p>What evidence do you have for your answer?</p>	<p>at the household who is able to help. We help to take the bin out for elderly, disabled, infirm or visually impaired persons. To apply for assisted bin collections, residents can visit the HDC website and fill in the application form where possible or contact the operation team to receive the guidance for the process. Additionally, if residents do not require assistance for collection can opt for a smaller wheeled bin.</p> <p>Accessible Communication: Ensure that all information related to the change is communicated in accessible formats such as large print or easy-read formats. Accessible online resources and communication channels will be available, considering the needs of individuals with visual impairments or cognitive disabilities.</p>
<p>Gender reassignment – gender reassignment discrimination occurs when a person is treated differently because they are trans*.</p> <p>Are there concerns that the new policy/service could have a differential impact on individuals with this protected characteristic.</p> <p>Are there any concerns that the policy/service amendments could have differential impact on individuals with this protected characteristic? What evidence do you have for your answer?</p> <p>*although the term gender reassignment and transsexual is in the Equality Act 2010, it is accepted that the preferred term is trans.</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>Marriage and civil partnership in the workplace; this refers the protected characteristic of marriage and civil partnership which is a union between a man and a woman or between a same-sex couple. Civil partnership is between partners of the same sex. Discrimination is when a person is treated differently at work because a person is married or in a civil partnership.</p> <p>Are there concerns that the new policy/service could have a differential impact on individuals with this protected characteristic.</p> <p>Are there any concerns that the policy/service amendments could have differential impact on individuals with this protected characteristic?</p>	<p>No</p>

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<p>What evidence do you have for your answer?</p>	
<p>Are there concerns that the function could have a differential impact in terms of pregnancy and maternity in the workplace (e.g. pregnant or breast-feeding women). Pregnancy is the condition of being pregnant or expecting a baby. Maternity refers to the period after the birth and is linked to maternity leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth, and this includes treating a woman unfavourably because she is breastfeeding.</p> <p>Are there concerns that the new policy/service could have a differential impact on individuals with this protected characteristic.</p> <p>Are there any concerns that the policy/service amendments could have differential impact on individuals with this protected characteristic?</p> <p>What evidence do you have for your answer?</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>Race – this refers to the protected characteristic of race. It refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins. Gypsy/Travellers are distinct group within this category</p> <p>Are there concerns that the new policy/service could have a differential impact on individuals with this protected characteristic.</p> <p>Are there any concerns that the policy/service amendments could have differential impact on individuals with this protected characteristic?</p> <p>What evidence do you have for your answer?</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>Communication and Information: We ensure that information about the chargeable green bin collection service is communicated in a culturally sensitive and inclusive manner, addressing potential language barriers and catering to the needs of diverse racial communities. The focus is on promoting equity, fairness, and inclusive service provision for all members of community.</p> <p>Where people are unable to access the application form, via the website or internet, we direct them to places such as community groups or libraires where they can access the internet if applicable. Additionally, customer service can support the residents completing the form and making a secure and payment for the annual fee. (A project to ensure the Council are PCI compliance is currently being scoped)</p>

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<p>Religion and Belief in the workplace - refers to any religion, including a lack of religion. Belief refers to any religious or philosophical belief and includes a lack of belief.</p> <p>Are there concerns that the new policy/service could have a differential impact on individuals with this protected characteristic.</p> <p>Are there any concerns that the policy/service amendments could have differential impact on individuals with this protected characteristic?</p> <p>What evidence do you have for your answer?</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>Sex - this refers to the protected characteristic of sex which can mean either male or female, or a group of people like men or boys, or women or girls.</p> <p>Are there concerns that the new policy/service could have a differential impact on individuals with this protected characteristic.</p> <p>Are there any concerns that the policy/service amendments could have differential impact on individuals with this protected characteristic?</p> <p>What evidence do you have for your answer?</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>Sexual orientation – this relates to whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes.</p> <p>Are there concerns that the new policy/service could have a differential impact on individuals with this protected characteristic.</p> <p>Are there any concerns that the policy/service amendments could have differential impact on individuals with this protected characteristic?</p> <p>What evidence do you have for your answer?</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>Are there concerns that the function could have a differential impact on part time/full time employees?</p>	<p>Yes</p>

Huntingdonshire District Council Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

<p>What evidence do you have for your answer?</p>	<p>The implementation of a subscription garden waste collection service will reduce our current reliance on short-term agency personnel (which is essential to be able to deliver a non-chargeable service to every household in the district). The normal and expected staff attrition rate, alongside a reduction in agency staff is expected to manage the staffing level to levels required for a subscription service, where only residents who pay for the service receive it.</p> <p>In response to unexpectedly low demand for the subscription garden waste collection service the relocation of both part time/full time HDC employees to other areas of the Operations service that require additional support, would be investigated.</p>
<p>Are there concerns that the function could have a differential impact in terms of specific characteristics of Huntingdonshire e.g. Rural isolation</p>	<p>No</p>

Findings

Where potential for adverse impact has been identified (age, disability, race,), additional support has been put in place to address these potential impacts, to reduce any barriers to accessing the resident advice service e.g., working with partners, assisted collection and information available in different formats.

Recommendations

1. For households on lower incomes, the Council will support residents through the Council Tax Support Scheme, that calculates the contribution required based on the benefits they are in receipt of. A review of this scheme in 2023 will ensure the most financial vulnerable residents are offered the greatest level of Council Tax Support award.
2. Residents in our district who need additional information, advice and guidance can contact the Residents Advice and Information team, who take time to assess the person's personal circumstances and work with them to suggest suitable and sustainable changes and routes to small funding pots that can help to achieve their goals. We will continue to encourage residents on lower incomes to contact the Residents Advice and Information team to explore the ways they may be able to reduce their household expenditure and/or apply for funding if the retention of a garden waste collection service is important in their household to maintain positive physical and mental health.
3. In addition, households on lower incomes will be welcome to share bins under their own informal arrangements but only one household will be responsible for the subscription and adherence to the T&Cs of the scheme.
4. The Council will work directly with District Councillors, Town and Parish Councils to co-design the offer of support for low-income households and local communities through incentives as a way to minimise any negative impact of the change on residents.

Huntingdonshire District Council Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

5. The implementation of a robust communication strategy to inform residents about the change, utilising various channels such as social media, websites, leaflets, letters will provide clear and concise information about the service, associated costs and secure payment methods.
6. Provide information, advice and guidance through our Customer Services advisers to support residents in understanding the chargeable service (registration process, payment options) and addressing concerns or questions they may have.
7. Continuously monitor the service, collect and analyse the data to assess the effectiveness of the service and identify any necessary adjustments or improvements.

Garden Waste Subscription Service

Options for Discounts for residents on benefits 2024/2025

Contents

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Background and Current Position

HDC Operations services currently operates a two-tiered green bin (garden waste) provision. The first bin is collected at zero cost to residents once fortnightly. Residents can purchase additional bins at cost in addition to the freely collected bin.

To ensure that the green bin provision can continue to operate there is a need to introduce a charge for the first bin to create a sustainable model that operates at cost. The cost for this provision is £57.50 per annum for the first bin, and £30 per additional bin, up to 5 bins in total.

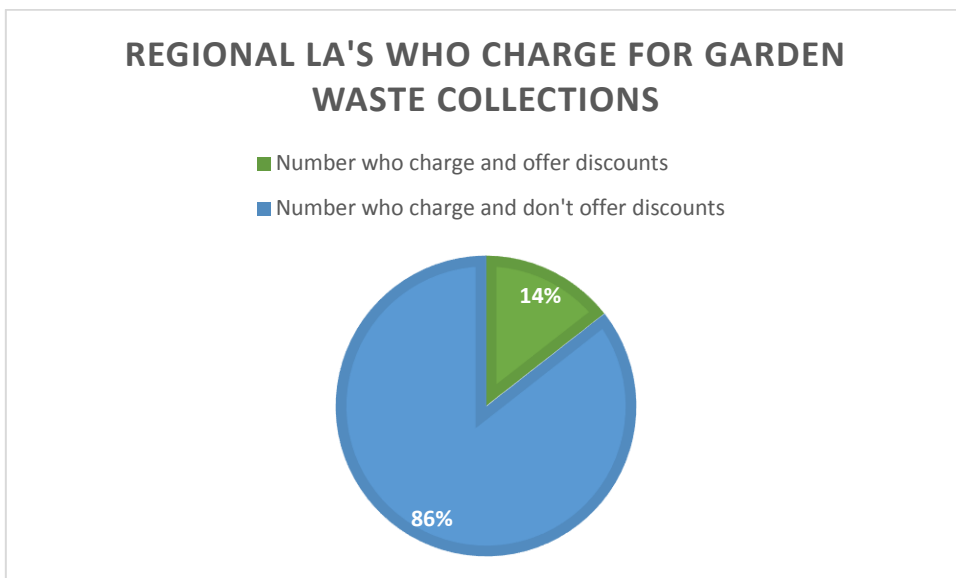
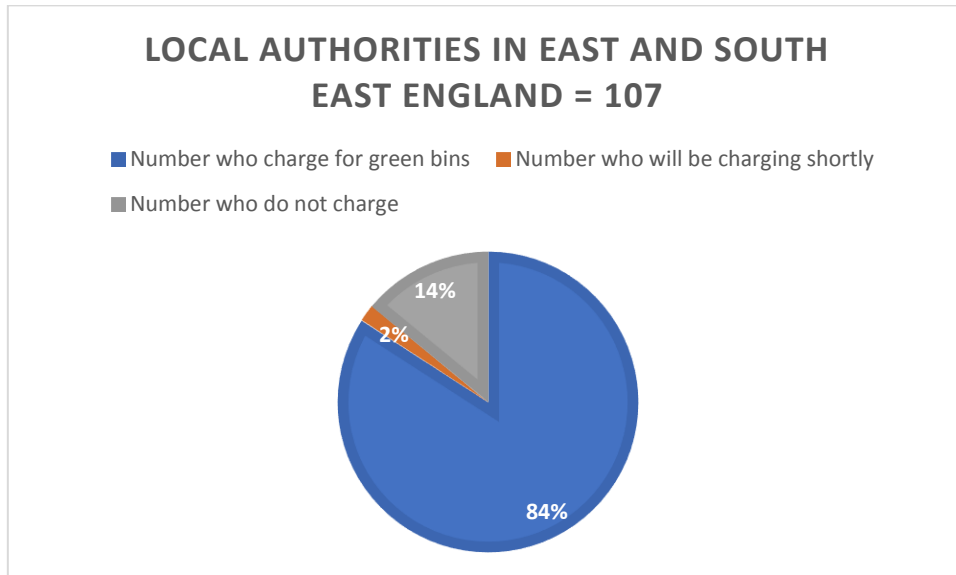
Officers and Members are acutely aware of the potential negative impact of implementing the change of service, particularly for residents on lower incomes. To mitigate the impact a number of incentives, discount considerations and discounts for residents receiving benefit will be considered to understand the feasibility and viability of any support. These options are in addition to the Equality Impact Assessment completed as part of the Cabinet paper for chargeable garden waste proposals.

Around 65% of authorities across England and half of the waste collection authorities in the Eastern Region have already opted to charge for household garden waste collections.

Benchmark against other Local Authorities

In order to understand the viability of such schemes HDC officers undertook a review of all Local Authorities in the East and South East of England region to identify whether they charged for a garden waste service and if so, whether a discount scheme was offered to resident on lower incomes. There are **107 identified LAs** within this region of, of those **90 charged** for garden waste, with only **13 offering publicised discount schemes**

Findings of benchmarking investigation:



Contact was made with the Councils listed below who offer discounts to lower income households through their garden waste subscription schemes, to understand their processes, pinch points and solutions to discounted schemes. Although limited responses were received, there are still correlating factors which are detailed in the summary below. In addition to this, potential solutions to our current HDC process have been explored.

Local Authorities in the East and South East region that offer a discounted scheme to the cost of a garden bin are listed below:

- Uttlesford
- North Hertfordshire
- St Albans
- Three Rivers
- Watford
- Bracknell Forest
- Reading
- Southampton
- Basingstoke and Deane
- Eastleigh
- Hart
- Winchester
- Oxford

Requests for information were made to these Councils about how they operated a discount scheme. Meetings were held with Winchester and Watford to explore further questions and of the remaining LA's, all those mentioned above responded with some information provided by email.

When offering a discount scheme based on residents in receipt of benefits all Local Authorities reported the following issues:

1. Validation of the resident's eligibility for a discount – not done
 - The process to validate a discount would be laborious manual process that broke automation and therefore where authorities chose to offer a discount, they didn't complete any validation checks.
 - Local Authorities chose not to validate that their residents were in receipt of benefits and accept the application for discounted garden waste on the basis of trust, subject to the inclusion of a housing benefit reference number when submitting the application form.
2. Renewal via DD – discount remains
 - No validation took place when a resident renewed via Direct Debit as the admin time taken to check whether the resident was still on benefits, notify the resident that the charge had increased and amend the Direct Debit was cost prohibitive. It was deemed more cost effective to allow the resident to continue to qualify for the discount, even if their eligibility had ended.

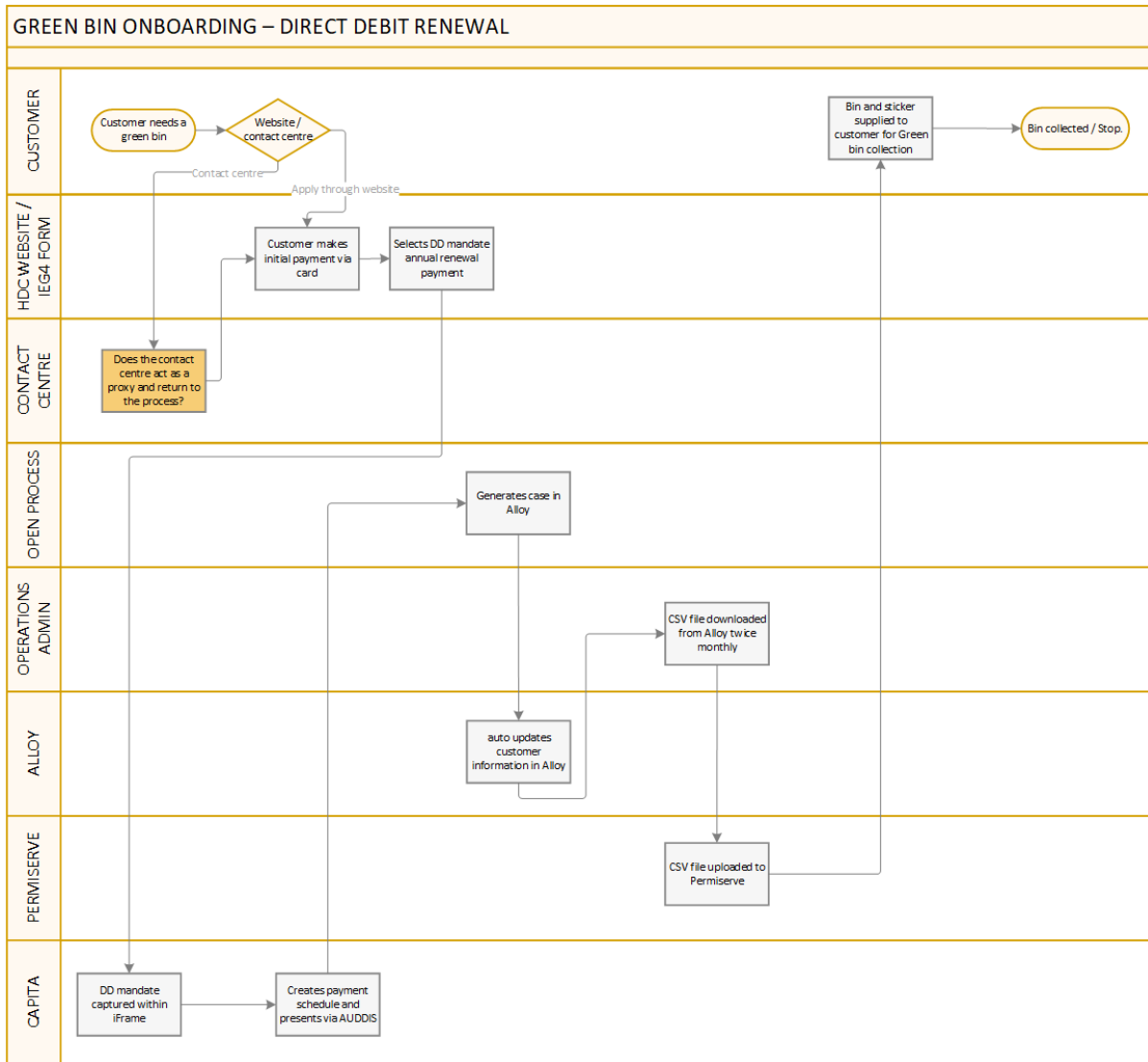
Discount Options in Detail

Option 1: No discount is offered to residents in receipt of benefits (current offer)

The HDC proposal is to offer residents an automated subscription service that processes the initial payment, set ups a DD mandate for annual renewal minimising the effort for residents and the administrative costs to the green bin provision.

Customer Services operating as a proxy for residents estimate a call costs a minimum of £7
A high-level automated solution is seen in the process flow below:

As-Is Process (Not Scalable)



Pro's

- + All residents applying for the non-statutory service pay the same amount
- + The process remains automated throughout the life cycle of the process
- + Renewal is via Direct Debit

Con's

- No discount available for residents in receipt of benefit

Option 2: Offer a resident discount (application validated)

In order to offer a discount scheme to residents on housing benefit the following would need to apply:

- A resident makes an application and selects within the form that they are in receipt of benefit which would entitle them to a discount
- The form applies the discount to the cost of the service
- The payment is not processed as the benefit reference needs to be validated by HDC.
- Instead of moving through the automated process the form would break from this and deliver to a customer service inbox

- At this point all part of the automated process would stop / break
- The Customer Service Advisor (CSA) would need to have access to the Housing Benefits system to validate the benefit discount request (something only the most experienced advisors have access to, which increases the cost of the interaction)
- The CSA cross references the Housing Benefit reference number submitted with the form with information stored in the Housing Benefit system.
- Where the data is not validated the CSA contacts the customer to say that their application has closed as they are not entitled to a discount and the resident will need to apply and pay the full amount.
- Where the data is validated, the CSA will contact the resident. The resident would make payment over the phone for the application. The CSA would then send the application and validation to the Waste Minimisation Officer (WMO) inbox
- The WMO manually updates the customer information in Alloy to show that the resident has paid for the bin and can be added to the upload to Permiserve for the delivery of the sticker.
- The following year rather than being able to renew via Direct Debit the customer must renew as if making a new application to step through the validation exercise again, re-introducing all of the admin steps already detailed
- Estimation is that the cost for the interaction would be circa £20 for Customer Services, and introduce a newly created cost for the WMO work stream. In addition to the discount the resident receives as a result of the application HDC would receive less than 50% of the cost to resident

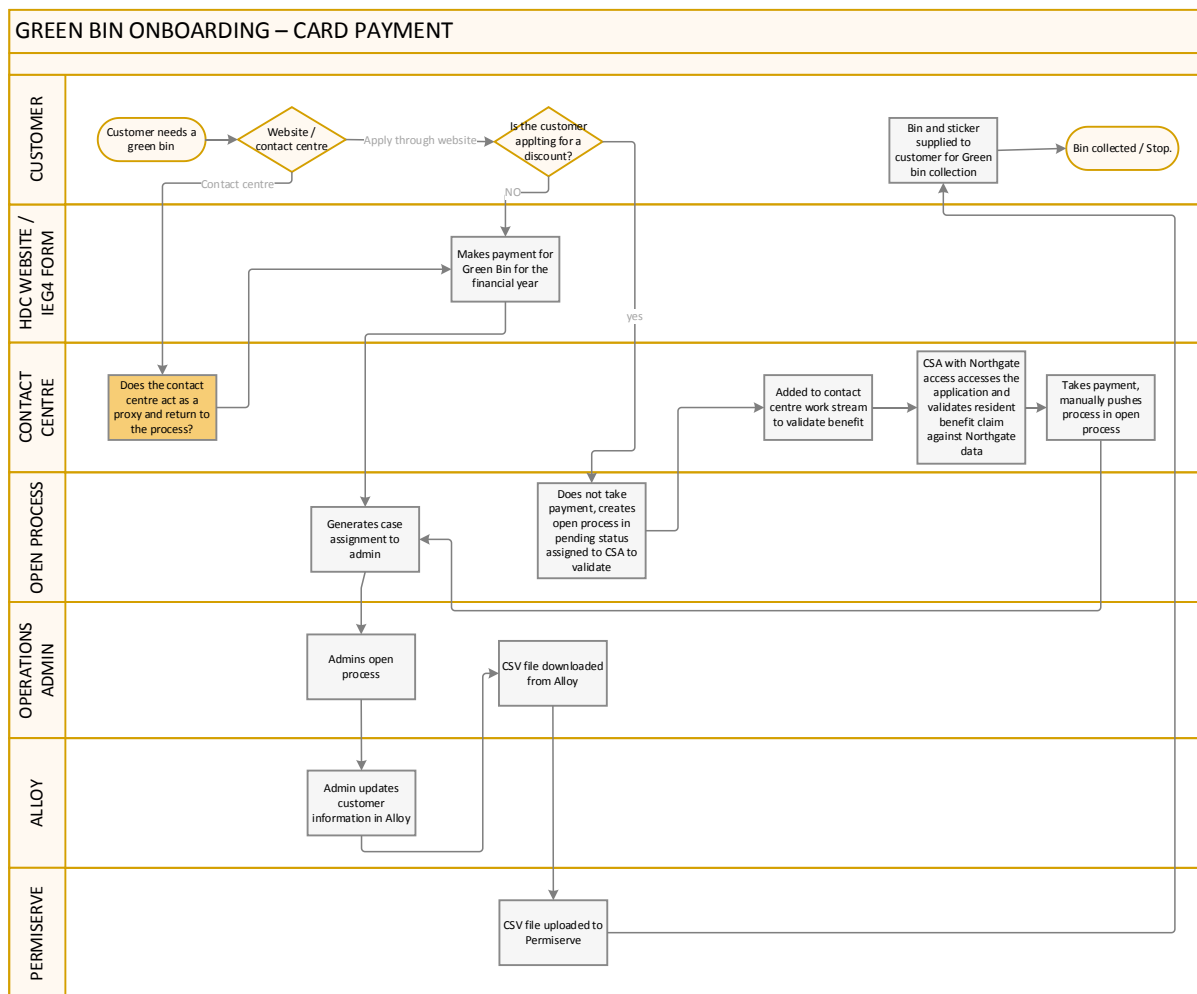
Pro's

- + All discount applications are validated, the potential for misuse is mitigated by the validation of each application manually
- + Entitled residents receive a small discount to their green bin collection

Con's

- The automated service is not available
- Introduces an additional workstream that hasn't been scoped as part of the project.
- Significantly increases the overheads and in some cases may negate the cost of the service to HDC ie: no financial benefit as revenue is negated
- The Direct Debit renewal is unavailable to the residents due to the validation process, and therefore the resident needs to go through the onboarding process year on year

Benefit Validation process:



Option 3: Offer a resident discount (application not validated)

- The resident makes an application in the normal way, as stated in Option 2
- The application form has some number format validation to prevent the resident from adding in XXXXXX rather than a number in the correct format that could be validated / cross referenced with the Housing Benefits system
- HDC **do not** validate the reference number, but rather assume that the resident is providing the correct information.
- The discount is applied year on year and no validation exercise takes place, the discount remaining in place for as long as the DD remains active

Pro's

- + The automated process remains in place
- + The Direct Debit remains in place
- + No change to the process from option 1 other than the additional information required for a benefits reference number (small amend to the current form)

Con's

- There is no validation process to ensure the application is legitimate

- Residents free to misuse the provision
- Reduction in value to HDC and inability of the organisation to demonstrate tangible value and support to lower income households via the introduction of a discounted scheme

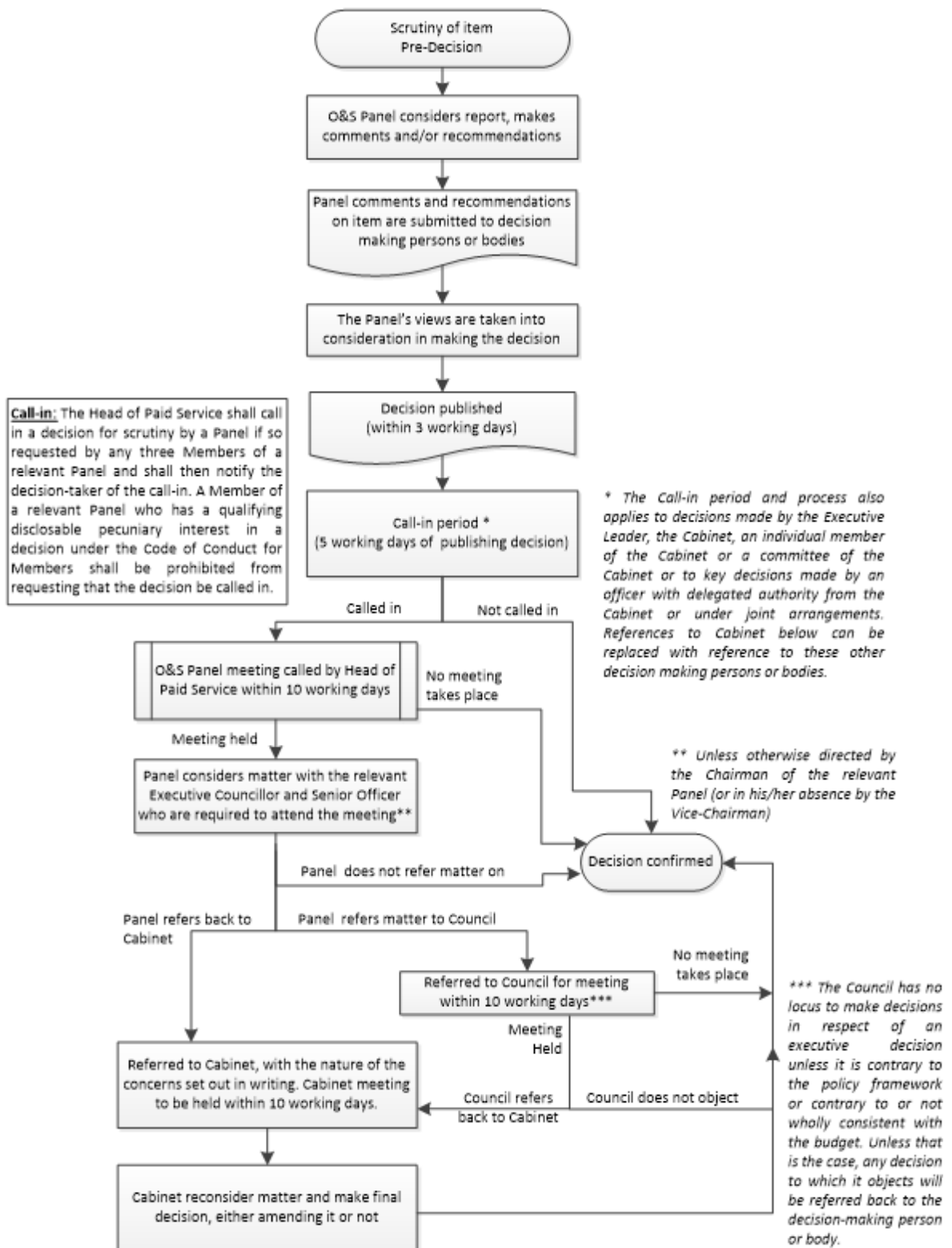
Recommendation

Due to the additional administration costs (Option 2) and/or the implementation of a non-validated process (Option 3) the recommendation is Option 1 ie: to not offer a discount to the household garden waste subscription service to residents on housing benefits. This recommendation is additionally supported on the basis that of 65% of Councils in England charging for garden waste collection service, only 8 were identified as offering a discount to their scheme for residents in receipt of benefits.

Due to the service being a non-statutory, optional service for residents where alternative provisions exist, the preference is that low-income families are supported via the CTS scheme and can still apply to use this service via the normal channel, ensuring that the cost to administer the service remains sustainable and automated.

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Appendix B – pre-decision scrutiny and Call-In processes



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