

**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 following 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