

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.