

CHARGING FOR A SECOND GREEN BIN
(Report by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being))

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 At its meeting held on 9th October 2012, the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) considered the report by the Head of Operations on Charging for a Second Green Bin. The following paragraphs contain a summary of the Panel's discussions on the report.

2. THE PANEL'S DISCUSSIONS

- 2.1 Councillor D M Tysoe has informed the Panel that the Council is looking at ways of increasing its income. This proposal has this purpose. It should be seen in the context of some London Councils that charge for all green waste collection. This Council is proposing to provide free collection of the first green bin for all its residents but the collection of the second green bin should be regarded as a premium service and, therefore, should attract a charge. This will be fairer to all residents and will provide a significant return for the Council.
- 2.2 Councillor P L E Bucknell has addressed the Panel on this matter. He has expressed the view that residents will not pay for the second bin and will instead put green waste in grey bins; this will have an adverse effect on the waste service budget. In addition, the change could lead to an increase in fly tipping. The charge itself is a significant amount compared to the District Council's portion of the Council Tax. He has suggested that VAT will apply because the charge is for a service. Finally, he has reported on his discussions with a representative of a London council, which has introduced such a charge, who has expressed the view that it was a mistake to do so.
- 2.3 Members of the Panel have raised further concerns about this proposal. They have stressed that the waste collection service is the most highly valued service provided by the Council. They have also drawn attention to the fact that it is a universal service and is one of the best performing in the Country. There is concern that this performance will worsen if this proposal is adopted. It will also damage public perception of the Council. It is argued that the Council should instead be promoting recycling. In this respect, the Council might take steps to encourage composting of green waste. Furthermore, it is suggested that the Council should focus on non-statutory services when looking to make savings rather than on services such as waste collection, which are a statutory requirement.
- 2.4 Councillor Tysoe has responded by pointing out that the change will not affect the majority of residents and that if every second green bin is returned there will be a reduction of 3.4% of waste collected. At the same time the Council has extended the range of materials it collects, which will increase recycling. He has further indicated that fly-tipping is a criminal offence and the Council will undertake enforcement. Advice has been received that VAT would not apply.
- 2.5 During discussion on fly tipping it has been established that the additional cost of enforcement has not been factored into the business case presented

in the report. Experience at other authorities suggests that there will be an initial increase in fly tipping but this will decline over time. If it continues to be a problem there will be a need for additional resources. For this reason and to provide more relevant information on how the scheme might work in Huntingdonshire, the Panel would have preferred to have had information on how similar schemes have operated in other rural areas.

- 2.6 On being put to the vote the Panel unanimously agreed that the Council should not introduce a charge for second green bins. The main reasons for this decision are its adverse effect on recycling rates, the likely damage to the public's opinion of the Council, the potential for there to be an increase in fly tipping and the level of the charge compared with the District Council portion of the Council Tax. Representatives of the Panel will attend the Cabinet meeting when this item is considered.

3. CONCLUSION

- 3.1 The Cabinet is requested to take into consideration the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) as set out above when considering this item.

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Background Documents - Reports and Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) held on 9th October 2012.