

TITLE OF REPORT: **Charging Structure for Garden Waste Collections 2021**

REPORT OF: **Colin Huntington, Strategic Director, Housing,
Environment and Healthy Communities**

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek Cabinet and Council approval of the charging structure for garden waste collections 2021.

Background

2. In September 2016 Cabinet approved the previous increase in charging for the collection of garden waste, with the cost for the service £31 for those signing up by 31 January 2017 and £33 for those signing up after this date. The charge was for 15 fortnightly collections between April and October 2017. No further increases for garden waste collections have been implemented since.
3. 20,670 residents opted into the current scheme prior to its scheduled commencement in 2020 via 3 alternative payment methods - online, by telephone or by face-to-face contact.
4. The Council began accepting additional subscriptions to the 2020 scheme on 4 May 2020 and since this date, a further 4,469 new collections were added to the 2020 scheme.
5. Its delivery is designed to recover the costs associated with its provision. However, this has not been achieved since the last price increase in 2016 and this year it is projected that for the garden waste collection service there will be a shortfall of approximately £70,000.
6. However, to ensure that statutory waste services could continue to be delivered during the initial phase of the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic and the implications arising from the national lockdown, the delivery of the scheme was suspended before 2020 collections commenced. Following a further review of waste service delivery during the pandemic, the 2020 household garden waste scheme began collecting from service subscribers from Tuesday 12 May. Unfortunately, this meant that every subscriber that had registered for the scheme prior to 24 March missed a total of three collections each because of the suspension to service delivery.
7. Therefore, in September 2020, the Council emailed current subscribers announcing that, depending on when they registered for the 2020 scheme, a full reduction for the missed collections (either £6.20 or £6.60) will be automatically applied for households renewing their subscription for the 2021 scheme.

Proposal

8. It is proposed that the Council implements an increase in the charge for garden waste collections that will take place from April to October 2021.
9. The proposed minimum charge for 15 collections of a garden waste bin during 2021 is £34.
10. Residents will receive notification later in 2020 confirming the details of the scheme and confirmation of the charge for 2021. Those wishing to participate will be asked to sign up by 31 January 2021 in order that routes can be designed to ensure collections take place from beginning of April 2021.
11. Residents will also be advised that those signing-up after the deadline will pay a fee of £36.
12. Appendix 1 provides information on the charging structure and the reasons for incentivising early sign up.

Recommendations

13. Cabinet is asked to recommend Council to:
 - (i) Approve the charging structure for garden waste collections for 2021.
 - (ii) Authorise the inclusion of the £34 and £36 charges on the fees and charges schedule for 2020/21 so that payments can be taken from November 2020.

For the following reasons:

To mitigate rising service delivery costs associated with the household garden waste kerbside collection service over the last five years.

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APPENDIX 1

Policy Context

1. The proposals are consistent with the framework for achieving the Council's new strategic approach "Making Gateshead a Place Where Everyone Thrives".

Background

2. The incentivised charging for garden waste was first implemented in 2016 with payments being taken from November 2015. 24,687 properties were contacted via letter in November 2019 regarding the 2020 scheme, with subscriptions being taken from 11 November. An issue of Gateshead Now which included an editorial promoting the 2020 garden waste scheme was emailed to 32,808 residents in mid-November 2019. Both communication activities highlighted the £31 early-bird discount for subscriptions received by 31 January 2020 and subsequent £33 fee for those received after this date.
3. 20,670 bins were signed-up by the originally scheduled 2020 scheme commencement (18,473 taking advantage of the early bird rate) which made it easier to plan routes and send data for the printing of stickers and calendars. However, the initial collections were disrupted by the COVID-10 coronavirus pandemic and national lockdown.
4. Residents have continued to sign up throughout the 2020 collection period.
5. Of those bins currently signed up 72% did so online, which is the most cost-effective method for the Council, approximately 20% by telephone and 8% via face-to-face contact.
6. The proposal aims to continue with the incentivised early sign-up to enable effective route planning and ensure residents can receive their full 15 collections, whilst reducing administration costs. Residents will be asked to sign up by 31 January 2021 and pay £34. Those signing up after this date will have to pay an increased fee of £36.
7. This charging structure treats all residents equally, no matter how they choose to sign-up (whether before or after the deadline) but provides a financial incentive to those that chose to do so within the agreed deadline.
8. Notification will be sent to residents in November requesting them to register for 2021 garden waste collections.
9. The charges of £34 and £36 apply to all residents, but those who subscribed to the 2020 collection season will receive a reduced rate based on the three collections that were unable to be delivered.
10. To encourage the use of cost-effective payment methods, residents will be asked to pay for 2021 scheme subscriptions online via the Council website, which links to the channel shift work programme. However, residents will also have an opportunity to pay for the 2021 scheme via the telephone.

11. Residents can join at any point after the deadline however the price will remain at £36.

Consultation

12. Consultation has taken place with the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Members for Environment and Transport.

Alternative Options

13. Other options were considered but this incentive scheme remains the most viable in terms of budget stability. It allows advance notification to be given to residents opting into the scheme outside of the normal process of approval of fees and charges.

Implications of Recommended Option

14. **Resources:**

- a) **Financial Implications** – The Strategic Director, Resources and Digital confirms the proposed increase will offset the increased costs of the service.

- b) **Human Resources Implications** – Nil.

- c) **Property Implications** – Nil.

15. **Risk Management Implication** - The risks associated with the impact on demand for the service have been assessed when considering introducing an increased charge for this service. This report sets out the reasons why the Council believes the proposed implementation of a charge is reasonable however as with any increase, the reasonableness of the charge is open to legal challenge.

16. **Equality and Diversity Implications** - A full Comprehensive Impact Assessment was undertaken prior to the introduction of the charge for the previously free garden waste collection service, and it has been confirmed that no new Equality Impact Assessment is required for this change to an existing charge.

17. **Crime and Disorder Implications** – There is potential that some residents may dispose of their waste by fly tipping in lanes and over back fences onto public open spaces.

18. **Health Implications** – Nil.

19. **Climate Emergency and Sustainability Implications** – Collecting garden waste separately to be processed as recycling (composting) is preferential to disposal within the residual waste stream because of its environmental benefits. Composting garden waste also realises other environmental benefits for the Council's residual waste treatment process as the energy-from-waste facility operates more efficiently due to the improved calorific value of the feedstock due to the removal of 'wet' garden waste. However, if less households subscribe to the 2021 scheme as a result of the increase of the charge there will be an impact on the

kerbside recycling rate, although the impact would be likely offset by an increased garden waste tonnage received by household waste and recycling centres.

20. **Human Rights Implications** – Nil.
21. **Ward Implications** – The proposed charging would apply to garden waste collections that are provided across the borough.