

## **SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**REPORT TO:** Cabinet

**DATE:** Monday 18<sup>th</sup> July 2022

**SUBJECT:** Charging for Garden Waste Collection

**PORTFOLIO:** Transport & The Local Environment

**CHIEF OFFICER:** Richard West

**CONTACT OFFICER:** Savio DeCruz

**WARD(S):** All

**KEY DECISION:** YES

**EXEMPT:** NO

**DECISION SUBJECT TO CALL IN:** YES

**APPENDICES:** Appendix 1 – Equalities Impact Assessment

### **1 Summary and Recommendations**

1.1 This report sets out the opportunity to charge for garden waste collection and by so doing significantly improve the financial position of the authority

#### **Recommendations:**

Cabinet is recommended to agree to:

- a) Introduce a charge of £50 per year per 240L green wheeled bin for the collection of garden waste over 50 weeks (break for 2 weeks over Christmas). The 50 week period would start on the 1 November each year. The first year will commence on Tuesday 1 November 2022.
- b) Existing 240L green wheeled bins which have already been allocated will remain with those households irrespective of whether the householder wishes to pay for a future garden waste collection service, to keep costs to a minimum and to enable anyone who is a subscriber to the current free collections to be able to subscribe to the chargeable service easily should they later decide they wish to do so. But waste will only be collected from those households who have paid for the collection service.
- c) With effect from 1 August 2022, new subscribers to the Garden waste service will be charged £45 for provision of a green 240L wheeled bin which may be new or reconditioned (second hand).
- d) A further report to come to September Cabinet setting out how we will reform and adapt our general waste and recyclables collection services, as part of the commitment in the Improvement & Recovery Plan to produce a comprehensive

waste and recycling plan. This will include how best to position the authority to move to the standard waste collection model set out in the Environment Act 2021

**Reason:** The majority of local authorities charge for garden waste collection and many charge for the provision of wheeled bins. It is estimated that charging for garden waste collection would provide a significant income to SBC of between £700k and £900k depending on take up and the period (number of weeks over which we make collections) but this cannot be guaranteed. Charging for wheeled bins would make provision of future 240L green wheeled bins cost neutral to the authority

## **Commissioner Review**

*“The Commissioners are content with this report.”*

## **2 Report**

### **Introductory paragraph**

2.1 Garden waste collection is a service for which local authorities are able to make a charge and the majority of local authorities choose to do so. SBC currently provide a free of charge garden waste collection to residents but our financial position is such that we now need to consider making a charge. The proposed charge is in line with charges made to residents by neighbouring local authorities. Charging for garden waste collection may encourage home composting (which is the best way to manage garden waste, as well as compostable household waste) and will bring new income from those residents who choose to have a garden waste collection.

### **Options – Garden waste Charges**

- **Option 1** – continue with a free of charge garden waste collection over 9 months of the year March to November (40 weeks), the “main growing season”
- **Option 2** – charge for the collection of garden waste over 9 months of the year March to November (40 weeks) the “main growing season”.
- **Option 3** - charge £50/year per 240L green wheeled bin for the collection of garden waste over 50 weeks (break for 2 weeks over Christmas) which would align us with neighbouring and Berkshire authorities. The 50 week period would start on the 1 November each year. The first year will commence on Tuesday 1 November 2022.

### **Background**

2.2 Local authorities have a responsibility to lead in protecting the environment for future generations by using resources efficiently and by reducing the amount of waste that society creates. Where garden waste is created then we need to compost this waste wherever practicable rather than disposing of it to incineration or to landfill. We currently do this by encouraging home composting (best option) and by providing a garden waste collection service with the collected garden waste processed into compost using a windrow composting system at a private sector facility.

- 2.3 We have a contract with Shorts until 21 February 2023 for offtake of garden waste at the outdoor windrow composting facility at Planners Farm, nr Winkfield (a new contract will need to be procured in the forthcoming months). There is no contractual limit to the volume of waste which we can deliver to the Planners Farm Composting Facility but there are constraints over changing the composition of the waste delivered. Garden waste needs to be a mix of woody waste and softer waste (grass cuttings) in order to facilitate windrow composting. The process produces PAS 100 accredited compost.
- 2.4 Our current garden waste collection service is a free of charge fortnightly “Opt In” service. The service is provided over 39/40 weeks between March and November each year (9 months). This is the main growing season and also covers the majority of the leaf drop season. We used to collect over 50 weeks of the year but we moved to 9 months in 2020/21 to deliver a saving of £71k / year in collection costs. People with larger gardens have more need for a 50 week cycle than those with smaller gardens. Those people with larger gardens are more likely to subscribe to a chargeable garden waste collection than those with smaller gardens.
- 2.5 We currently provide garden waste collection to approximately 28,000 of our c40,000 street properties. New builds with gardens often request the service but the core housing stock is fairly settled so in broad terms it is a service which is provided to around 70% of street properties. It is not normally provided to residents who share communal bins (mostly flats) although there are a few exceptions. The volume of waste is very dependent on the weather. If we have a hot wet spell then volumes increase dramatically, a hot dry spell sees the opposite.
- 2.6 It is important to note that Garden Waste Collection is an optional service. Anyone without a garden or who doesn't want to have Garden Waste Collections can simply choose not to subscribe. Residents who do not wish to sign up can either home compost or take their garden waste to Chalvey Household Waste & Recycling Centre or to the Buckinghamshire Council Household Recycling Centres at Burnham and Langley where it will be recycled (windrow composted) free of charge.
- 2.7 If we choose to charge for garden waste collections then we need to set a charge. The table below sets out the terms under which Berkshire Authorities charge for garden waste collection. It can be seen that:-
- Most authorities provide 25 collections per year, operating a fortnightly collection over 50 weeks
  - Bracknell (£39) and Reading (£48) require that residents buy their green bins
  - Collection charges range from £46/year to £70/year
  - Most do not offer a discount
  - Most do not restrict the number of green bins paid for

	No. Collects / Year	Charge to Buy a Bin	Collection Cost £/Year	£/2nd Bin	Max No. Bins	Discount cost
Bracknell Forest	25	£39	£55	£55	N/A	£28
Buckinghamshire	25	None	£50	£72	N/A	None
Reading	25	£48	£65	£65	2	Reduction Ctax Support
West Berkshire	25	None	£46	£63 yr1 then £36/yr	5	None
RBWM	25	None	£69	£69	N/A	None
Wokingham	21	None	£70	£70	N/A	None

2.8 Advice from WRAP (Waste Resources Action Programme) is that if we introduce a charge for garden waste collection then those residents who have a green wheeled bin are likely to respond as follows:-

- Those who present their green bin for collection regularly are likely to pay
- Those who present their green bin for collection intermittently are unlikely to sign up in the first instance but are likely to join once they have tried alternatives
- Those who present their green bin for collection very infrequently are likely to stop using the green bin rather than pay

2.9 The data available and the advice provided by WRAP indicates that our "Opt In" subscription may fall to around 50% in the first instance and then could rise to approximately 65% as users accept that the service is something that is worth paying for. The table below shows the range of incomes for a series of "what if" scenarios. It can be seen that if 50% of current users subscribe to the new service rising to 65% then we could receive an income of between £700,000 and £900,000 but this is not guaranteed.

**What if "x" % of 28,000 households pay "x" £/yr for garden waste collection**

% Pay / £/Yr	£20	£30	£40	£50	£60	£70
30%	£168,000	£252,000	£336,000	£420,000	£504,000	£588,000
40%	£224,000	£336,000	£448,000	£560,000	£672,000	£784,000
50%	£280,000	£420,000	£560,000	£700,000	£840,000	£980,000
60%	£336,000	£504,000	£672,000	£840,000	£1,008,000	£1,176,000
70%	£392,000	£588,000	£784,000	£980,000	£1,176,000	£1,372,000
80%	£448,000	£672,000	£896,000	£1,120,000	£1,344,000	£1,568,000

2.10 WRAP advise, for administrative ease and to prevent the opportunity for bad debt, that subscribers be required to use an on-line form to subscribe and to make a single payment in advance. On receipt of their payment, subscribers would be mailed a coloured sticker to place on their green bin. There will be a different coloured sticker at the beginning of each garden waste year so every 1 November.

This provides a visual indicator to collection crews as to which green bins to collect and which to leave unemptied – this will be an issue at the beginning of each garden waste collection year.

- 2.11 This is a high volume low price service which needs to be simple to provide and to administer. WRAP advise that subscribers be required to pay the annual fee in advance and to encourage this that we charge the same fee irrespective of when a subscriber joins the service - so if a subscriber joins in week 1 of the service they will pay the annual fee, if they join in week 10, week 20, week 40 or any other week then they will pay the annual fee. The incentive to pay by 1 November each year is that subscribers will benefit from all 50 garden waste collections and will also have the opportunity to dispose of their Christmas tree (real ones not artificial ones) by cutting it into pieces and placing it in the green wheeled bin. Payments will be made by credit/debit card. The opportunity to pay by Direct Debit will be explored and offered as an alternative if practicable.
- 2.12 Collection crews will only collect those green bins which have the correct coloured sticker on them. Those green bins presented without the correct coloured sticker on them will be left and residents advised to subscribe to the scheme.
- 2.13 Collection days will inevitably need to change as a new round structure will need to be built from scratch to reflect the changed operational dynamic caused by a 50% reduction in the number of bins to be collected. As this is a subscription service with communication entirely through email then subscribers can be informed of changes and reminded of changes at will.
- 2.14 It is cost prohibitive to collect unwanted green wheeled bins in situ as a result of our current free of charge opt-in garden waste collection and, in addition, we have very limited storage space at the depot. It is anticipated that a significant number of residents who do not subscribe to the service in the first instance will do so in time as they experience the inconvenience of the alternatives. Green bins will be left with residents irrespective of whether they join the scheme in the first instance to allow this phased migration unless they vociferously object to this. In the event that a resident does not subscribe to the chargeable service and presents their green wheeled bin for garden waste collection then it will be left and the resident will be communicated with. If this happens repeatedly then the green wheeled bin will be removed. Should green bins be misused / presented filled with mixed general waste (refuse) then they will be removed.

### **3. Implications of the Recommendation**

#### **3.1 Financial implications**

- 3.1.1 For forecasting purposes it has been assumed that the service will initially generate an annual income of £700k. The subscription year will run from 1 November to 31 October and hence spans two accounting years, with the first subscription year's income being allocated as £292k in 2022/23 and £408k in 2023/24.
- 3.1.2 The annual recurring additional cost to move from collecting 40 weeks of the year to collecting 50 weeks of the year is £71k.
- 3.1.3 The annual recurring additional cost to administer the chargeable service including processing applications to join, dealing with enquiries and issues is estimated to be

£20k per year. This will be to pay for temporary administrative support at peak subscriber points (equivalent of 3 months x 2.5 staff at £7k/month).

- 3.1.4 The one-off cost to set up the online payment form and to carry out the initial publicity and promotion campaign will be £20k, which will fall in 2022/23.
- 3.1.5 Based on the above, the net benefit of the service is estimated to be £180k in 2022/23. 2023/24 would see a full year effect of the income and publicity costs would not be required, therefore on an annualised basis the net benefit would amount to an estimated £609k before inflation.
- 3.1.6 The above projections are based on the assumption of a 50% take up by households at the proposed charge of £50/year, hence are subject to variation in either of these factors.

## 3.2 Legal implications

- 3.2.1 As a Unitary Authority, SBC has responsibility for waste collection and for waste disposal – we are both a Waste Collection Authority (WCA) and a Waste Disposal Authority (WDA). Section 45 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 (the EPA 1990) makes it a duty of a waste collection authority to arrange for the collection of household waste in its area, except in limited prescribed circumstances. No charge may be made for the collection of household waste, except in cases prescribed in regulations. Where a charge may be levied, a waste collection authority is not obliged to collect the waste until requested to do so and having recovered a reasonable charge for the collection. The Controlled Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2012 confirm that garden waste is a category of waste for which a charge can be levied for collection.
- 3.2.2 Section 46 of the EPA 1990 confirms that waste collection authorities can require an occupier to place the waste for collection in receptacles of a kind and number specified. In relation to the provision of receptacles, the authority may provide these free of charge, propose that they be provided, if the occupier agrees, by the authority on payment by him of a single payment or such periodical payments as he agrees, require the occupier to provide them if he does not enter into an agreement or require the occupier to provide the receptacles. The authority can also specify the size of receptacles, where they are to be placed for the purpose of emptying and the substance or articles which may or may not be put into them.
- 3.2.3 The Environment Act 2021 contains new duties in relation to collection of recycles and residual waste. This is intended to create a national model of waste collection and disposal in the future:-
- Fortnightly collection of general waste
  - Fortnightly collection of paper and card for recycling (fibre collection)
  - Fortnightly collection of mixed dry recyclables (excluding paper & card) including glass bottles and jars, plastic bottles, other plastics, tetra-pak for recycling etc
  - **Fortnightly collection of garden waste**
  - Weekly collection of food waste

The new duties have not yet been brought into force, however they will not change the existing legislation which permits a separate charge to be levied for garden waste and other prescribed types of waste.

3.2.4 Section 51 of the EPA 1990 places a duty on waste disposal authorities to arrange for places to be provided at which persons resident in its area may deposit their household waste and for the disposal of waste so deposited. The places shall be situated so as to be reasonably accessible to residents in the area, are open at reasonable times and are available for deposit of waste free of charge. Garden waste can be taken to household recycling centres in the local area and disposed of free of charge as an alternative to a paid collection service.

### 3.3 Risk management implications

3.3.1 Willingness to pay for a garden waste collection is an unknown so the estimated income cannot be guaranteed, although the basis of the estimate set out in this report is drawn from intelligence gained from WRAP.

3.3.2 Those residents who choose to stop using the garden waste collection service may instead put garden waste into their grey wheeled bins for disposal. Where garden waste is found in a grey wheeled bin then it will be left and the resident will be required to remove the garden waste before the grey bin is emptied.

3.3.3 If subscription is significantly lower than anticipated then there may be a need to reduce the number of vehicles, drivers and loaders needed to provide the service – see workforce implications below.

### 3.4 Environmental implications

3.4.1 Charging for garden waste collection may encourage adoption of home composting which brings a net environmental benefit. The Councils website will include information on how to home compost.

3.4.2 If garden waste is placed undiscovered into the general waste collection (grey wheeled bin) then it will go for incineration with energy recovery. This would bring an environmental and economic disbenefit.

### 3.5 Equality implications

3.5.1 Service changes would be applied to all residents. Existing provision to collect and return containers to and from the point of waste collection will continue for those households who do not have a person within the household who is able to do so themselves.

3.5.2 An Equality Impact Assessment is provided as **Appendix 1 – Equality Impact Assessment**.

### 3.6 Procurement implications

3.6.1 None

### 3.7 Workforce implications

- 3.7.1 It has been assumed that the existing two collection rounds of refuse collection vehicle crewed by a driver plus 2 loaders will continue to be needed. Providing that this proves to be the case then there will be no reduction in the workforce. In the event that subscription is lower than expected then we may need to reduce the number of crews to one crew for some or part of the year and/or reduce the number of loaders for some or part of the year.
- 3.7.2 The nature of the service has changed and this may lead to unhappy customers where they have not understood that the service is a chargeable service. Crews and administrators will be trained and supported in dealing with any confrontation that may result.

### 3.8 Property implications

- 3.8.1 None

## **4. Background Papers**

- Municipal Waste Strategy 2015-2030
- The Environmental Act 2021

## Appendix 1 – Equality Impact Assessment

Responsible Officer	Savio DeCruz
Directorate	Place and Community
Service Area	Direct Services Organisation (DSO)
Proposal	Fortnightly Collections and Garden waste Charges

### **Proposed Waste Collection Service Changes:**

The Council currently spends £3.6m /year to provide a weekly collection of residual waste, a weekly collection of recyclable waste and a fortnightly collection of garden waste (garden waste). All collections are in wheeled bins / wheeled containers. We have the power to charge for garden waste collection but choose for our current service to be free of charge. In addition, we spend £5.6m per year disposing of waste – this includes the collected waste just mentioned and also waste and recycling delivered to Household Waste & Recycling Centres, street cleansing arisings, fly-tipping and commercial waste.

The Council's financial position demands that we reduce our costs. We estimate that we can generate between £700k and £1.3m of income to offset collection costs by charging £50/year for fortnightly garden waste collection.

This EIA proposes to identify key groups that are affected by both proposals and the relevant mitigation to support the affected groups.

### **Briefly summarise the key objectives and expected outcomes of the change and explain why it is needed.**

It is proposed that the Council introduce a £50 per year charge to collect garden waste from street properties with their own wheeled bin who choose to pay for a fortnightly garden waste collection (additional bins per property will be charged at £50 per year) It is also proposed that we charge £45/wheeled bin for any resident who requests one after 1 August 2022.

### **Why the change is needed?**

The Council's financial position demands that we reduce our costs. We can generate between £700k and £1.3m of income to offset collection costs by charging £50/year for fortnightly garden waste collection.

The Council will have to identify and implement other more difficult savings options within the Place & Community Directorate if savings are not made in the residual waste and recycling collection service.

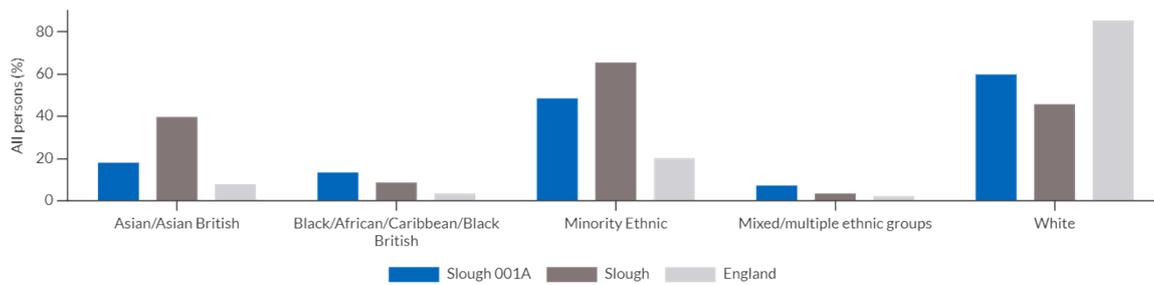
### **Rationale for the Individual Potential Changes to the Waste and Recycling Service**

**Charging for garden waste:** Local authorities do not have to collect garden waste and if they do then they can make a charge if they wish. SBC introduced a free of charge garden waste collection service in 2004 but our financial position now is that we need to either discontinue to provide a garden waste collection service or make a charge for the service.

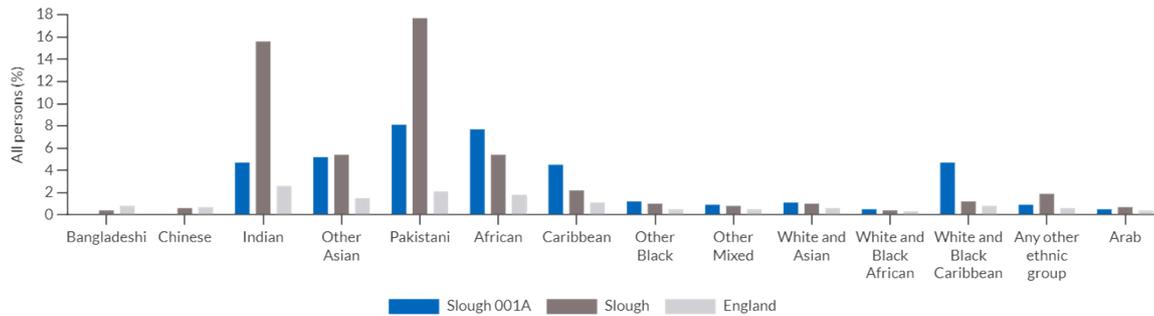
### **Does the service carry out equalities monitoring? If No, please state why?**

The Council does not collect equalities monitoring information from residents using waste and recycling collection service, as this is a universal service provided to all households in Slough and requests for special assistance can be made. Data is not collected at the moment through resident satisfaction surveys, but will need to be considered as part of the change to ensure that key groups are not further impacted. The Council's borough profile as summarised below gives an overview of the demographic profile for residents and shows how ethnically diverse the population is, this will be updated later this year when the 2021 Census data is published.

### **Broad ethnicity groups**



### Detailed ethnicity groups



**Please provide an overview of who uses/will use your service or facility and identify who are likely to be impacted by the proposal**

*If you do not formally collect data about a particular group then use the results of local surveys or consultations, census data, national trends or anecdotal evidence (indicate where this is the case). Please attempt to complete all boxes. Consider whether there is a need to consult stakeholders and the public, including members of protected groups, in order to gather information on potential impacts of the proposal.*

Equalities Impact Indicate Yes, No or Not Known for each group	Disability	Age	Sex	Race/Language	Religion & Belief	Sexual Orientation	Marital Status	Households with young children	Socio-Economic
Do people from the following groups benefit from your service?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Does the change help to eliminate discrimination, promote equality and foster good relations between different groups?	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Could the proposal discriminate, directly or indirectly these groups?	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
Could this proposal affect access to your service by different groups?	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Could this proposal affect access to information about your service by different groups?	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
Could the proposal have an adverse impact on relations between different groups?	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No

### Mitigation against impacts of changes

<p>Introduce an optional garden waste collection service at a cost of £50 per annum. Additional bins are available each chargeable at £50 per year</p>	<p>The change from a free fortnightly collection of garden waste to a charged system for fortnightly garden waste collections may have a disproportionate impact on low-income households with a need for the service regardless of where they live. The Council currently offers a "No Charge" system for residents to drop off their garden waste at the HWRC in Chalvey.</p> <p>Further mitigation could include the Council offering low-income households 'give back' offers. These include providing home compost bins to residents adversely affected or people with a need for minimal garden collection services but this is not currently planned.</p>
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