

## **REPORT TO THE CABINET**

7 June, 2016

**Cabinet Member:** Councillor John Wynn Jones

**Subject:** Review of the Garden Waste Collection Service

**Contact Officer:** Gwyn Morris Jones, Head of Highways and Municipal

---

### **Decision Sought**

To adopt an arrangement, as described in this Report, for charging residents a fee for the collection of garden waste from 1 January, 2016.

To set a fee of £33 per annum for the collection of garden waste by means of a 240 litre size bin (or 5 biodegradable sacks) and £28 per annum for every additional bin or smaller (140 litre) size bin.

---

### **Introduction**

In its meeting of 16 December, 2014 the Cabinet gave approval to implementing a range of efficiency savings schemes which included the 'Review of the Garden Waste Service' in order to achieve a saving of £750,000 in the 2017/18 financial year.

The intention to review garden waste collection arrangements, including the possibility of raising a fee for the provision, is in accordance with the Council's 2010-2025 Waste Strategy. The Welsh Government in its good practice 'Collections Blueprint' recommends that residents should be charged a fee for the fortnightly collection of garden waste in order to reduce the amount of garden waste put out by households for collection, and in order to save on collection and landfill costs.

This matter has been considered by the Communities Scrutiny Committee in its meeting of 19 May, 2016. The Committee was asked to consider options available to implement the change, and to make recommendations as to how the suggested means of implementing the change can be improved (See Appendix 1 of this Report).

The purpose of this Report is to seek the Cabinet's approval of the recommendations made by the Scrutiny Committee as to the arrangements to be put in place for charging residents a fee for the collection of garden waste.

### **Reasons for recommending the decision**

At present 9 counties in Wales charge some form of a fee for the collection of garden waste with many more authorities considering doing the same. The Controlled Waste Regulation 2012 and the Environment Protection Act 1990 provides flexibility for authorities to charge a reasonable fee for the collection of garden waste.

Currently the cost of providing the garden waste collection service is circa £807,000 per year. An annual financial saving of £750,000 can be achieved on charging a reasonable fee for the service. This savings scheme has previously been approved by the Council and it is now necessary to decide on the arrangement to be implemented in order to achieve the savings.

### **Relevant considerations**

The Scrutiny Committee recommends operating a fortnightly collection throughout the year rather than for 9 months in a year.

A fee of £33 for a 240 litre size bin (or 5 N<sup>o</sup> biodegradable sacks is recommended for the 2017 year, with a 15% reduction to this fee for additional or smaller (140 litre) bins.

The main concern with implementing this change is the anticipated fall in the demand and usage of the service on fee charging and its likely effect on the Council's recycling performance. A fall of up to 3% in recycling performance is possible and there will be a need to monitor this carefully on introducing the change and in order to avoid financial penalties from the Welsh Government if the recycling performance fell below the 58% statutory threshold, 64% by March, 2020 and 70% by March, 2025.

The Scrutiny Committee also recommended that efforts should be made to persuade the Welsh Government that it is not appropriate for the Council to receive a possible financial penalty for not composting garden waste which is, more appropriately, home composted.

Another concern is ensuring that there is a simple and convenient means for residents to pay for the service and the need for adequate publicity and raising awareness to the change, and to stress that the disposal of garden waste by means of the residual bin is unacceptable.

The Scrutiny Committee also had concerns regarding the timing of introducing this change so near to and just after implementing significant changes to collecting residual waste at 3 weekly intervals.

### **Next steps and timetable**

On receiving the Cabinet's approval, it is intended to start the new arrangement 1 January, 2017. This coincides with the 'quietest' time of year for the collection of garden waste, it is well in advance of the growing season and helps to ensure the anticipated savings are achieved in the 2017/18 financial year.

In order to do this, it will be necessary to collect and receive payment of fees between October and mid-December, 2016.

### **Opinion of the Statutory Officers**

#### **Chief Executive:**

Obviously, this is a substantial efficiency saving and without it being realized, we would face a huge gap in the budget which would have to be met by further cuts. There are obviously risks associated with its implementation, especially in relation to the Council's recycling targets. No doubt in approving this, the Council will need to urge the Cabinet Member and the Department to build upon the excellent engagement work done during considerations on changing to 3 weekly collection and the management of risks associated with the change.

The point made by the Scrutiny Committee on how the recycling performance is measured is very pertinent. It would be lamentable, to say the least, if this Council and the people of Gwynedd were to be penalised due to a growth in home composting.

---

**Monitoring Officer:**

The legislation relevant to waste collection identifies garden waste as a form of domestic waste that the Council can charge a fee for its collection. This Report also describes the basis upon which the fee is established relating to the cost of providing the service. I have no further comments regarding propriety.

**Chief Finance Officer:**

The Council and the Highways and Municipal Department are already committed to achieving a £750k saving from this scheme involving charging residents a fee for the collection of garden waste. The Welsh Government in their 'Collection Blueprint' also recommends that a fee should be charged for the collection of garden waste with a fee already being charged by a number of authorities in Wales. In supporting the recommendation, the risks expressed by the Community Scrutiny Committee should be noted. I also note that there are several fluctuating budget headings for waste, and that it is challenging to manage numerous savings schemes in the waste service that are difficult to predict.

The Highways and Municipal Department has consulted with the authorities that charge a fee for the collection of garden waste in order to establish the possible effect of this change. I understand that there is likelihood of having significant opposition to the change in the first year (from April 2017), before the new arrangement settles down. I believe that the savings can be achieved mid-term through a combination of additional income and reduced collection costs. There will be a need to monitor the recycling performances during this time, and also review the success of the scheme since it is unlikely that we will clearly see the invariable outcome before the middle of 2018.

---