



CAI.07 12/13

Challenge and Improvement
Committee

26th June 2012

Subject: A review of the cessation of winter garden waste collections and efficiency savings.

Report by:

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Purpose / Summary:

In an endeavour to reduce expenditure Members elected to reduce the green garden waste collection service offered to residents by ceasing the collection of waste during the four winter months November to February. In addition further savings were generated by reviewing the collection rounds and introducing the collection of garden waste to approximately 5000 properties on Saturdays. This report is a review of the efficacy of this policy, its impact on the environmental performance of the service, and impact on customer satisfaction.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

It is recommended that:-

1. That the cessation of green waste period be delayed by a month with the suspension now starting on 3 December and collections resuming on 25 March.
2. That further publicity be given through available channels to enable residents to plan for the cessation and to also understand the reasons why the cessation period takes place.

3. That officers continue to investigate the viability of a “bespoke” service for those residents who miss the convenience of doorstep collections, and are prepared to pay for this service.
4. That the analysis following the cessation of green waste for the 2012/13 period be reviewed in six months time.

IMPLICATIONS

Legal: The Environmental Protection Act 1990 (Sec 45) places responsibilities on Councils in relation to waste collection. Additionally, garden waste is identified by the Controlled Waste Regulations 2012 as household waste for which a charge for collection can be made.

Financial: Significant savings have been achieved by reviewing the waste collection rounds, changing the day that some properties have their garden waste collection service and also by reducing the service over the winter period. There were some set up costs which offset the year one savings.

Staffing: Reducing the numbers of green waste collections in a year meant that less staffing resources needed to be deployed on this work during the winter months. Consultation took place with staff on this previously, however there were no redundancies as a result of the changes, and changing the timing of the cessation period will have little impact

Equality and Diversity including Human Rights: An equalities impact assessment was carried out for the July 2011 report. A new report is not required.

Risk Assessment: There were risks with reducing the green waste service as it was anticipated that there may be some adverse reaction from the community that value the winter collection service. It was known that there would also be a reduction in the amount of green waste that is recycled

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities:

Reducing the numbers of collections reduced the CO₂ emissions from the fleet. There is a risk that some people chose to take green waste to a household waste centre in their own vehicle which may offset the CO₂ reductions. If more garden waste were included in the landfill waste next year then this may increase Methane emissions.

INTRODUCTION

The collection of green waste is a mandatory service, which can be charged for, and which the Council chooses to collect separately on a fortnightly basis. A free green waste collection was introduced as part of the triple bin scheme in 2009. The aim was to significantly increase the Council's overall recycling rate to meet the Lincolnshire waste partnership target of 55% and reduce waste to landfill. In 2010/11 West Lindsey District Council achieved the best recycling rate in the county at 56% - amongst the top 20 performing authorities in the country.

BACKGROUND

The decision was made at Council in July 2011 to suspend the collection of green waste during November until February/March 2012. Collection day changes would be made at the same time in order to make savings of more than £150,000 each year. This was as part of a package of efficiency savings across the council which were implemented after a series of consultation events with the public and the Citizens Panel.

Collection vehicles use a lot of fuel. As well as the financial benefit of the suspended collections it was also anticipated that a reduction in carbon emissions could be achieved per year by not collecting small amounts of green waste in the winter months. Because so little garden waste is collected during the winter period, there was expected to be little affect on our recycling and composting rate and only a small increase in the amount of waste going to landfill.

CONSIDERATIONS

At an earlier meeting of the Challenge and Improvement Committee, it was agreed that a small group of members and officers would undertake a review of the winter cessation of green waste collections to understand the reasons for doing so and the impact on West Lindsey residents. Following discussions in May 2012 the scrutiny group agreed the scope for this review with a main focus on four key issues as set out below:

- Analysis of official complaints to West Lindsey District Council about the cessation of the green waste service

- Analysis of whether the cessation met the original budget objectives agreed by Councillors in July 2011 in terms of level of financial savings planned at £156,00 per annum
- Assessment of other impact, e.g. staffing impact, CO₂ emissions, fuel, waste rounds
- Analysis of the customer survey looking at the timing of the shutdown period for 2012/13.

Members of the group carried out their research which included discussions with relevant officers in Customer Services and Operational Services

RESEARCH

During the review Members questioned relevant Officers in accordance with the scope that had been agreed. The key findings of Members' research is highlighted below:

- The initial projected savings of £156,000 are projected to be achieved as forecast. Early figures for April and May show that these savings are being realised so far.
- A very minor increase in the amount of refuse collected in the residual bin was recorded during the winter suspension of the green waste collection in 2011/12, but overall waste to landfill in 2011/12 decreased slightly. There is also no evidence to suggest the incidence of fly-tipping increased as a result of the suspension.
- Home composting was promoted heavily as the best environmental option for dealing with garden waste. During 2011/12 a total of 436 composters were purchased by West Lindsey residents through the Lincolnshire Waste Partnership scheme. Only 943 composters were sold by all the districts in Lincolnshire.
- 10 official complaints were received during the cessation period from the residents of West Lindsey. Members of the group considered this to be a low representation of the District and believed that most residents embraced the suspension.
- West Lindsey's waste collection service was considered very efficient. Preliminary figures showed an operating cost of £53.07 per year per household in 2011/12 which is comparable to the costs elsewhere in Lincolnshire.
- It was anticipated that the cessation of green waste would affect the Council's overall recycling rate by 3%, but the rate remained at 56% It was accepted by members that this was an exceptional result and the recycling rate is likely to decline in 2012/13
- It is the aspiration of the Lincolnshire Waste Partnership for all Councils within Lincolnshire to achieve a recycling rate of 50%, rising to 55% by 2015. This target is applicable to the County overall and not to individual District Councils. Even after the winter green shutdown in 2011/12 West Lindsey still has the highest recycling rate in the County at 56%
- The winter garden waste survey showed that the favoured period for stopping winter collections in 2012/13 was December to April

- The benefit of stopping green waste, for each additional week is, approximately £4,000. Further savings could be realised if the length of the cessation period is increased to 18 weeks, but there would be a significant decrease in the savings if the shutdown was reduced to 3 months.

CONCLUSION

From the evidence and findings detailed in this report, the members group has drawn a number of general conclusions which have informed its recommendations.

It was important for the group to establish during the course of the review whether the cessation had met the original budget saving objectives, as agreed by Councillors in July 2011, in terms of the level of planned financial savings. It was also imperative to ascertain what West Lindsey's residents had felt about the cessation as well as understanding how the service would be taken forward in the future.

The biggest benefit of suspending the collection of green waste is the amount of savings that it generates for the Council. Even taking into account start up costs, savings were realised during the 2011/12 winter in line with the report that went to Prosperous Communities in July 2012. Further savings are being made in 2012 as forecast and it is still anticipated that overall savings in 2012/13 will be approximately £156,000. This saving also coincided with, as predicted, the Council's carbon emissions being reduced. This is helping to deliver the Council's Corporate Plan and fulfil its ambition to be a greener Council.

In the hope of moving to a cessation date that better suits members of the community, views from residents and parish Councils have been taken into account and it is recommended that the shutdown does not take place until late November / December.

The majority of residents generate a small amount of garden waste over winter, and many are happy to home compost, use Household Waste Recycling Centres or continue to put materials in their green waste bin and then re-present it when collections resume.

However a number of people have stated that they miss the convenience of a collection from their door step during the winter, so members asked officers to continue to investigate the viability of a "bespoke" service for those residents.

A web survey showed that 22.4% of respondents would be prepared to pay extra for a doorstep collection during the winter months. Due to the low numbers, it was felt that an extra "one-off" collection of residents green bins emptied on a pre-determined date would not be financially viable.

Officers were asked to investigate the collection of garden waste for a fixed charge for up to six bags and determine a price to cover collection costs. It is anticipated that this service will be combined with bulky waste collections and residents will be able to contact the Council to make arrangements for a collection date of their choosing.

It was felt that it is vital that more publicity is given through existing channels to allow residents to plan for the cessation and also understand the reasons as to why it is recommended to this committee.

During the current economic climate, close consideration has been given as to whether it was the Council's priority to make savings or to achieve high recycling rates. It was considered by members of the group, that within this current climate, efficiency savings was paramount and there was a clear evidence base that the original cessation period of 16 weeks was the most suitable length of time

It was reassuring for Members to understand that as an authority West Lindsey are becoming a more efficient waste service as well as remaining one of the best performing recycling authorities in the Country.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations reflect the group's research and findings. It is hoped that these recommendations can create a positive impact of the green waste service.

1. That the cessation of green waste period be delayed by a month with the suspension now starting on 3 December and collections resuming on 25 March.
2. That further publicity be given through available channels to enable residents to plan for the cessation and to also understand the reasons why the cessation period takes place.
3. That officers continue to investigate the viability of a "bespoke" service for those residents who miss the convenience of doorstep collections, and are prepared to pay for this service.
4. That the analysis following the cessation of green waste for the 2012/13 period be reviewed in six months time.

Other amount

6 (100.0%)

- We would prefer normal collections to continue during November, with no collection in December, and a single collection in each of January and February, with normal collections resuming in March. We would be prepared to pay £20 for the collections in January and February
- Sell the bags at a central location and have a (monthly?) schedule to collect filled bags. In this way cash flow is maintained in advance of any collection with potentially a net gain.
- 1
- Nothing, I pay enough
- nil
- £1

5. If your preference is to have a "one-off" emptying of your green bin during the winter months, (as option 3a above) which month would you prefer?

12 (20.0%) November

13 (21.7%) December

23 (38.3%) January

12 (20.0%) February

6. Please tell us the village or town where you live

67 (100.0%)

- Langworth
- Bardney
- Blyton
- Morton
- Blyton
- Gainsborough with a small garden
- Gainsborough
- Gainsborough
- Blyton
- Glentham
- Aisby
- Market Rasen
- Welton
- Gainsborough
- Sturton by Stow
- Cherry Willingham
- Bardneey
- Bleasby Moor
- Grasby
- nettleton
- caistor
- Bishop Norton
- Swallow
- Burton
- laughton gainsborough
- Reepham
- Cherry Willingham
- Reepham
- Louth
- Cherry Willingham
- Sudbrooke
- Gainsborough
- sudbrooke
- Laughterton
- Keelby
- swallow
- Gainsborough
- Scothern
- Scothern
- Marton
- Nettleham
- Reepham. Actually I dont agree with any of the above options. Why not alternate with the blue bin in the winter months? I filled 16 large sacks with garden waste this winter. I never fill the blue bin.
- Snitterby
- SNITTEERBY
- Willingham-by-Stow
- Blyton
- Nettleham
- cherry willingham
- Waddingham
- Saxilby
- Spridlington
- Tealby
- northorpe
- The Town of Caistor
- Saxilby
- gainsborough
- caistor
- Marton
- grayingham
- HOLTON LE MOOR
- Hackthorn
- Gainsborough
- Brookenby
- CAISTOR
- Marton
- Gainsborough
- Morton

Thank you very much for your time completing this questionnaire.

The closing date was Monday 11 June 2012

Post implementation review

The Winter Cessation of Green Waste and round efficiency savings

Committee Reports -: Prosperous Communities and Challenge and Improvement committee

Lead Officer: Steve Leary

Objectives and Key Issues:

- To assess whether the desired outcomes of: reduced cost of service, minimised impact on environmental performance and customer satisfaction were achieved

Identify the issues that should be addressed to achieve the outcome.

Suggested three Key Issues to address are set out as follows:

- Analysis of customer feedback and official complaints to West Lindsey District Council about the cessation of the green waste service
- Analysis of whether the cessation met the original budget 2011/12 and is on track to deliver in 12/13 - objectives agreed by Council on 20 July 2011 in terms of level of financial savings.
- Assessment of other impact, e.g. staffing impact, CO2 emissions, fuel, waste rounds.

More issues to be identified at the working group meeting (including Cllr Paul Howitt-Cowan and Cllr Irmgard Parrott in May / June 2012 where this topic will be scoped.

Lines of Enquiry:

- Which specific areas will the review seek to investigate and report to prosperous communities / challenge and improve?

Members of the group to agreed that the lines of enquiry but likely to include the following:

- Alternatives shut down dates – customer survey currently on website. Press releases have been sent out and parish councils and members have been written to.

Alternative arrangements i.e. review of the Xmas tree collection service from 11/12 could Parish Councils be subsidised for hiring a green waste skip during a future cessation period

- Benchmarking with other authorities to understand their green waste arrangements.
- Effect on fly tipping (some people thought this would increase as a consequence).
- Effect on Black bin load (has the weight of bin collections increased)
- Could the cessation period of 4 months for green waste collection be lengthened/shortened?

- Introduction of a chargeable service in the winter months for those residents who require the service and are willing to pay
- Has anyone introduced a chargeable winter service after providing a free service.

Information from household waste recycling centres

Scoping Team:

- Which Officers could assist the process, which documents should be used as evidence?

Suggested that that the Key Officers for the review will be:

- Steve Leary, Recycling team Leader
- Ady Selby – Services team leader
- Customer services representative, Glyn Pilkington (optional)
- Review of green waste collection arrangements in other councils.

Timescale:

As set out in the forward plan, but first meeting is needed with some urgency to scope issues and enable report to progress to leaders panel at the end of June

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