



Prosperous Communities Committee

Tuesday 2 November 2021

**Subject: Review of Bulky Waste Charges**

Report by:

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Purpose / Summary:

To review the current charge for bulky waste collections and understand the potential impact of free, or reduced price, collections on incidents of fly-tipping.

**RECOMMENDATION(S):**

That Members recommend to the Corporate Policy & Resources Committee that option 4 (to continue with current pricing schedule, plus inflation, for bulky waste collections) be approved.

## IMPLICATIONS

**Legal:** The Council has a statutory duty as a Waste Collection Authority under Part II, Sec 45, Environmental Protection Act 1990 to make bulky waste collections from householders where requested. However a charge can be made to cover collection costs.

### Financial : FIN/103/22/MT/SSc

The recommendation of this report is to continue with the current bulky waste charge of £33 for 6 points. This will have no effect on the MTFP.

Maintaining the fee level at £33 would result in a widening of the gap between income generated and total cost recovery (TCR), as service costs increase (staff, transport). However, controllable costs of the service are recovered, and the Fees Charges and Concessions policy states that fees may be set to help the Council in achieving its objectives by Influencing service users' behaviour, i.e. by encouraging the public to dispose of waste responsibly.

The fee set also complies with the principles of the Fees Charges and Concessions Policy (2.2) in that it is a mechanism for managing demand, as to reduce the fee would likely result in an increase in demand which could not be met with existing resources, and therefore have a negative impact on the reputation of the Council if requests for collections cannot be met within reasonable timeframes.

Other options proposed were to offer a free service or reduce the price of collection. Both these options would require an extra crew and vehicle to respond to expected demand. The revenue costs would increase by £57k per annum. Initial capital costs would be £70k for the vehicle and a further £70k every 5 years. Along with the extra costs would be the reduction or loss of up to £43.5k income generated each year.

**Staffing :** Should the charging policy for bulky waste change to reduce the cost to the customer, thereby increasing demand, it would be likely additional operatives and driver(s) would be required.

### Equality and Diversity including Human Rights :

There would be no impact from a change in policy on specific groups, as long as the charges remained the same for all residents. An EIA has previously been carried on bulky waste collection charges and this has been updated to reflect the policy options in this report. If policy changes are made the recommendation of the EIA is that further work should be carried out to understand potential impacts and an EIA update conducted before the report goes to committee. The updated EIA is at Appendix 1.

**Data Protection Implications :** No new implications, all data dealt with by Operational Services is handled in line with the Council's Data Protection Policies.

**Climate Related Risks and Opportunities :** Any strategy which would encourage increased levels of household waste would have negative environmental impacts. Also, the report identifies that any increase in demand may result in the need for another vehicle to be procured and operated, this would result in additional carbon emissions

**Section 17 Crime and Disorder Considerations :** Keeping the charge at the current levels could result in consistent of increased levels of fly-tipping. However, the evidence presented in the report suggests there is no strong link between charging for waste services and increased fly-tipping.

**Health Implications:** None associated with this report

**Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:**

Wherever possible please provide a hyperlink to the background paper/s  
If a document is confidential and not for public viewing it should not be listed.

**Risk Assessment :**

**Call in and Urgency:**

**Is the decision one which Rule 14.7 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?**

i.e. is the report exempt from being called in due to urgency (in consultation with C&I chairman)

Yes

No  XX

**Key Decision:**

A matter which affects two or more wards, or has significant financial implications

Yes  X

No

## **Executive Summary**

This paper will consider the impact of reducing the cost, or providing a free service, for bulky waste collections.

The report concludes that, whilst any reduction in charge may be popular with residents, there would be significant negative environmental and financial outcomes.

The strategy of reducing the service charge would seek to reduce the level of fly-tipping endured within the District. However, there is little evidence this would be achieved and evidence is presented within the report which refers to a case study where free collections were reintroduced, but there was no reduction in fly-tipping.

Any reduction in the price of the service would also compromise the recent move towards a 'user-pays' principle.

The report identifies the following options:

- 1. Introduce a free service**
- 2. Reduce the charge**
- 3. Introduce a buy one collection, get one free schedule**
- 4. Continue with the current charge plus inflation**

## **1      Introduction**

- 1.1 The Council has a statutory duty as a Waste Collection Authority under Part II, Sec 45, Environmental Protection Act 1990, to make bulky waste collections from householders where requested. However, a charge can be levied to cover collection costs.
- 1.2 Members resolved to introduce a £10 charge for each bulky waste collection in 2011/12, this was subsequently doubled to £20 the following year. Since then, the price has risen each year with inflation and is currently set at a minimum charge of £33.
- 1.3 There is regular discussion about whether charging for some elements of waste collections results in increased levels of fly-tipping. This has become especially topical given the dramatic increase in levels of fly-tipping throughout the Covid pandemic.
- 1.4 There is also an ongoing discussion about whether reducing the cost of collections, offering a first collection free or providing a 'buy one, get one free' level of service may incentivise residents to dispose of items more responsibly. Residents and Members occasionally refer to the Saturday 'static' services which were in place a number of years ago.
- 1.5 These options will be discussed in the main body of the report.

## **2      Reasons for charging**

- 2.1 There were a number of reasons why a charge was introduced, these are summarised below:
  - Charging encourages bulky items to be disposed at Household Waste Recycling Centres, where material will be more effectively sorted for recycling and reuse.
  - Residents within West Lindsey who currently do not use the bulky waste collection service, but manage their waste in a more sustainable way, previously subsidised the service through their council tax. The charges have helped provide a more efficient and fairer service, where the user of the service pays.
  - Charges have a positive impact on Councils' recycling rate by reducing overall tonnage of household waste collected and encouraging reuse.
  - Charities and social enterprises are benefiting through more donations of furniture and other items and more cooperative working with West Lindsey.
  - Residents of West Lindsey benefit as the charges promote exchange and reuse of goods.

- Charging saw a reduction in levels of household waste produced.
- The charge is helping to heighten awareness of householder responsibility for their waste.

### **3. Local and National charges and trends**

- 3.1 The latest national statistics available are from 2018/19, they highlighted that 307 out of 327 collection authorities charge for collections of bulky waste. Just 15 provide a free service, with 12 providing no service at all.
- 3.2 Table 1 below shows the current situation with charging across Lincolnshire. Whilst there are minor differences, most authorities charge roughly the same price for bulky waste collections.
- 3.3 The exception to this is in the City of Lincoln Council area, they provide a free service to pensioners, those on benefits and disabled residents, subject to a limit on the amount of collections. There is no service available to all other householders.

*Table 1 Charging for bulky waste in Lincolnshire authorities*

Authority	Price	Other Information
North Kesteven	£30	Up to three items
BBC	£26	Three items
East Lindsey	£35	Four items
South Kesteven	£30	Three items
South Holland	£30	Three items
CoLC	Free	For those on benefits, pensioners, etc, subject to conditions. Otherwise no collection available
West Lindsey	£33	Six points

### **4. Current performance**

- 4.1 In the 2020/21 financial year there were 1,986 bulky waste collection requests, 146 of these were repeat customers.

- 4.2 The budgeted income for the ‘Supplementary Services’ cost centre in 2020/21 was £75.6k, this includes income for bulky collections, plus new and replacement wheeled bins.
- 4.3 The cost of providing the services in the cost centre totalled £161.3k last year. This includes the cost of bulky waste collections, delivering wheeled bins and making free collections of clinical waste.
- 4.4 The service is popular and almost always at capacity, in general residents wait around 2-3 weeks for a collection.

## **5. Saturday ‘Static’ service**

- 5.1 A number of years ago, the Council provided a Saturday morning ‘static’ service, this involved parking refuse collection vehicles on car parks in villages around the District and inviting residents to bring their waste to the lorries for disposal.
- 5.2 These services were funded by Lincolnshire County Council as the Waste Disposal Authority (WDA), in recognition that West Lindsey residents did not enjoy the recommended access to local Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC).
- 5.3 This changed in March 2011, when The Rasens HWRC opened in Middle Rasen and the Saturday static services were suspended.
- 5.4 It is highly unlikely that the WDA would agree to restarting these services as allowing free, unrestricted access to waste disposal services does not synergise with the objectives of either the Waste Hierarchy or the Joint Municipal Wastes Management Strategy for Lincolnshire.

## **6. Fly-tipping**

- 6.1 There is regular debate about whether providing a free or subsidised bulky waste collection service would reduce levels of fly-tipping.
- 6.2 Table 2 below portrays levels of fly-tipping in West Lindsey over a number of years. Rates are dynamic, however there was a dramatic increase in 2020/21. This phenomenon is in line with national trends, there are a number of reasons for the dramatic increase, including;
  - People spending more time at home throughout the Covid pandemic, taking the opportunity to clear waste or improve properties, possibly using unscrupulous waste disposal suppliers.
  - People spending more time walking or cycling around their local environment and reporting fly-tipping more readily.
  - HWRC’s being closed or having restricted access.

*Table 2 Rates of fly-tipping in West Lindsey*

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Total (fly tips per year)	674	1056	1475	991	803	1197	957	2925

- 6.3 Analysis of the fly-tipped material collected shows that less than 50% of fly-tips consist of items which could be collected by the bulky waste service. The rest is other material including building waste, tyres, asbestos, etc.

## **OPTIONS**

### **7. Option 1 Offer a free service**

- 7.1 Offering a free service would be popular with residents.
- 7.2 As highlighted above, offering free, unlimited waste collections does not align with the objectives of either the Waste Hierarchy or the Joint Municipal Wastes Management Strategy for Lincolnshire.
- 7.3 There would likely be a high increase in demand. When a charge was introduced, service requests dropped by 50%. Presuming this trend was reversed and acknowledging the current vehicle is at capacity, there would be a need for a further vehicle and staff to ensure requests would be collected in a timely manner. The projected cost of this would be £57k on going costs for extra vehicle maintenance, driver and labourer, plus an initial capital outlay of approximately £70k for another vehicle.
- 7.4 There would be a loss of current income of £43.5k in 2022/23.
- 7.5 There would likely be an impact on charitable organisations as it would become easier for residents to dispose of items through the Council's free service, rather than seeking routes which encourage reuse or recycling.
- 7.6 There would be increased demand on the Customer Services team as a predicted circa 2,000 new service requests would be incoming.
- 7.7 When a charge was first introduced, there was not a dramatic rise in fly-tipping. Therefore, it is questionable whether introducing a free service would result in a decrease in fly-tipping. An in-depth BBC report from 2018 found no link between charging for services and fly-tipping. The report also cites an example at Croydon Council who re-introduced a free service, but did not benefit from any reduction in fly-tipping.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-46364689>

## **8. Option 2 Reduce the price of collections**

- 8.1 Reducing the cost of bulky waste collections would be popular with service users.
- 8.2 The impact of this strategy would be similar to making free collections. It would be likely demand would increase, more resources required and less material would be directed to the charitable sector.

## **9. Option 3 Buy one, get one free**

- 9.1 The Council values its regular and repeat customers. A buy one collection, get one free strategy would recognise and reward those customers.
- 9.2 However, this strategy would not be in line with the principles of the service. There is already an incentive in the pricing methodology for residents to dispose of more items at the time of the initial collection. Facilitating a second, free collection may encourage residents to dispose of items they may have otherwise have reused or donated to charity
- 9.3 Returning for repeat collections would not produce positive environmental outcomes, at a time when work is progressing with the Council's Carbon Plan.
- 9.4 Based on current usage, the Council would need to provide a minimum of 146 free collections and a maximum of 1,986 free collections. This would have a significant impact on the resource needed to service the function, in addition there would be a new financial burden.

## **10. Option 4 Continue with current charge plus inflation**

- 10.1 Continuing with the current charge may not be popular with residents seeking to dispose of bulky items.
- 10.2 It would however, provide a solution for residents when considering potential disposal routes for bulky items. Residents would continue to be referred to charitable organisations, or other more environmentally friendly disposal routes, thereby promoting reuse or recycling of items.
- 10.3 The charge would remain consistent with other Lincolnshire authorities.

